UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Narrative Underpaintings: An inquiry into curriculum making in a grade one classroom

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring, 2004

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Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-96431-0
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-96431-0

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Abstract

The research is a narrative inquiry re-presented in an 'art'istic form. An artist's perspective and the processes of painting provide a framework for the narrative telling of a grade one curriculum making experience. When painting an artist will sketch in an outline of what he or she proposes to paint. This outline helps guide and shape the artist's work as it unfolds. The addition of light washes of color, underpaintings start to add form and shape to the painting.

I use the painting/underpainting metaphor throughout as a way of explaining how my research puzzle has unfolded and how my narrative threads have come to shape my personal practical knowledge. I begin by telling my personal and professional stories. I tell stories of students' stories as they engage in making meaning from the grade one Science unit "Building Things". I attend to these separate stories, the narrative underpaintings, and how they mesh together and become the foundation for making meaning of curriculum in a grade one classroom?

In reflection I study narrative threads that lie under curriculum making and use these stories to illustrate the establishment of important aspects of the children's and my relationship. These relational aspects include voice, caring, shared authority, imagination, and a sacred space on a greater landscape. The children and I compose a shared story through curriculum making. The shared story is shared as improvisational theatre. From this experience I have gained awareness that curriculum as inquiry starts with personal and social knowing. An environment conducive to inquiry and learning as a social process needs to be a collaborative one.

Acknowledgements

I am able to live my story because of the many people who have provided love, trust and inspiration as they accompany me in my becoming.

To my students, I thank you for allowing me to play alongside you. I appreciate that you listen to my stories and share your stories with me. Your wonders continue to enrich my life and renew my sense of joy in the world around me. I feel privileged to be a part of who you are becoming.

As I worked through the writing and research process I always felt the presence of Jean inquiring alongside me. Your gentle strength, patience, wisdom and curiosity are an inspiration. Thank you Jean for sharing the joy of wonder with me.

My embodied personal knowledge and my story to live by was shaped by the storied lives of many fine women. I especially appreciate my grandmothers, Karin and Lily. Their lives where models of strength, courage and sensitivity. Their lived stories are entwined with mine.

This work would not have been possible without my amazing family. I am grateful for the loving patience of my husband Wayne, my two daughters Angela and Aaron, my parents Kirsten and Ray, and my siblings Brad, Mark, Michael and Jocelyn. I learned to tell stories through my experiences with them all.

I have been blessed with exceptional friends whose conversations, wonders and interest in my work enriched my graduate experience. Thank you Pam for bringing your questions and insights to our conversations. Thank you Juliette for the pleasure of your company. Our wanders through galleries helped me paint a research puzzle.

To my committee members I thank you for your support and engagement with my work. You have given me more to consider through the comments and questions you ask.

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Introduction

Structure of the Dissertation

For centuries sketchbooks have been used by artists and intellectuals, from Van Gogh to Matisse, from the exponents of historical movements to Ernest Hemingway. Art historians, students of the arts and appreciative art critics have long enjoyed peering into the sketchbooks of artists. Doodles, sketches, notes, ideas and emotions have been jotted down and harbored within the pages of sketchbooks. These books have helped us understand and appreciate the journey artists have taken before turning their sketchbooks into famous pictures or pages of beloved books. Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Jackson Pollack, and Leonardo daVinci all used sketchbooks as a means of being thoughtful about their art. The sketchbook can be a silent and discreet keeper of an artistic journey.

My notion of what comprises an artist's sketchbook is an accumulation of sketches, doodles, drawings, notes, scraps of story and ideas. The drawings and paintings contained within may be done quickly with little concern for detail. A sketch may be made to capture a general mood of a scene or to help the artist work out an idea for a finished composition. The sketchbook is as much about process as it is a product.

I have compiled a series of four sketchbooks in the following pages for this thesis. The sketches within these books are a collection of stories, photographs, ideas, wonders and conversations. They represent the work completed during

the process of curriculum making in a grade one classroom. The sketches are drawn from the experience I had, as the teacher, in relationship with a group of twenty grade one students.

In this narrative inquiry, an artist's perspective and the processes of painting provide a framework for the narrative telling. The first sketchbook establishes the painting metaphor. When painting an artist will sketch in an outline of what he or she proposes to paint. This outline helps guide and shape the artist's work as it unfolds. The addition of light washes of color, underpaintings, add form and shape to the painting.

In Sketchbook One I introduce the term underpainting. A painting can be a multilayered, thick, textural piece with layers of underpaintings to give it form and shape. My narrative inquiry work is thick with textures and layers (stories) that have shaped and formed the experience of curriculum making in my classroom. I use the painting/underpainting metaphor throughout as a way of explaining how my research puzzle has unfolded and how my narrative threads have come to shape my "personal practical knowledge". This embodied way of knowing, and many terms I use, in creating this 'landscape' of experience, have been developed by Clandinin and Connelly (1995). The title of each section continues the metaphor, as layer upon layer of underpaintings are added. I give reasons for choosing narrative inquiry as a methodology for my study. I attend to the context of me as teacher/researcher on the landscape of a particular school. My stories of childhood, days in school as a student, as a mother, and a teacher have

underpainted this inquiry. I end the first sketchbook with questions and wonders for beginning a new painting – the research puzzle – on a storied landscape.

In Sketchbook Two a metaphorical painting of curriculum making as a landscape emerges. I begin with the end – a description of a co-constructed landscape in a grade one classroom. I attend to the construction of an imaginary landscape in a grade one classroom. This section has the feel of being in an artist's studio while a painting is being created. I attend to the tools of the artist, experimentation, sketching of ideas, and the creation of the painting itself. The process of inquiry in the building things unit unfolds here. I tell stories of the children and I engaged in curriculum making.

In Sketchbook Three I return to the underpainting metaphor. Here, I reflect on the finished work of the children and study narrative threads that lie under the finished piece of curriculum making. I attend to the experiences that preceded the building things unit. I use stories to illustrate the establishment of important aspects of the children's and my relationship. These stories are recalled as I distance myself from being in the midst of the research. As I recall these shared experiences and as I tell these stories I attempt to understand the journey we undertook. I see the children and I composing a shared story. We go through the authoring process from beginning with what we know, creating a beginning for shared authorship, finding a shared author's voice, editing and reaffirming the co-authorship, sharing stories and co-authoring curriculum.

In Sketchbook Four, I examine the finished landscape of curriculum making in a reflective imagined conversation. Gathered around the completed

painting of curriculum making are people who have influenced or helped shape my "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988). As I engage in conversation with these people I reflect on the personal meaning I have constructed from the castle building experience. As I re-storied the experience through imagined conversation I realized the importance of curriculum inquiry as a personal and social means of knowing. I reaffirmed my beliefs about the importance of positive caring relationships amongst children and teachers.

Sketchbook One

Painting a research puzzle

On Saturday afternoons my friend and I like to take a break from our teaching and family lives and indulge in an afternoon of delicious tea, art gallery and bookstore tours or leisurely walks along riverside trails.

One particular afternoon we were in a small west end gallery. A very large painting caught my eye. It was at least forty feet long and five feet tall, resplendent with wild color and interesting texture. The artist had layered on the colors. Up close the viewer could see the strokes, scrapes and spreading of paint, the indentations of the palette knife left behind. The oil paints had been scooped up and smeared layer upon layer. The luminosity of some colors allowed others to shine through. Some of the bolder brighter colors obscured those beneath. Some strokes were bold, others subtle. Up close the painting was stunning and unforgettable in its formidable presence. The subject of the painting seemed to be a play of color and texture and the interest each creates juxtaposed against the other. I studied the painting for a long while before leaving the gallery. I wondered how an artist would undertake creating a painting of this magnitude. How can one gain perspective when working up close to something so huge? How did the artist choose to lay the colors where they lay? What was the inspiration? I imagined the painter to be a Jackson Pollack type, wildly and creatively spreading paint with abandon; improvising as the work unfolded.

It was as I left the gallery that I had one of those "ah ha" moments that stopped me in my tracks and made me go back and look again. In my peripheral vision [1] I caught sight of this painting again. Only this time a picture was revealed to me; one that was previously unseen by me. There in the painting was a spectacular field of wild flowers -- a rutted prairie road wound its way across part of the canvas and disappeared on the horizon.

How interesting that distance was required before I could see the picture. Also it was in the peripheral that I first saw what was there. I rethought my perception of how the painting was created. I no longer saw a Jackson Pollack type painter, but rather the work of an impressionist -- a Monet type of work. I went back for another long lingering look and pondered the painting. How does the painter create an impressionist work of that size? At times he/she must need to be close up, then at arm's length and then far away. I imagine the painter in a very large studio creating this painting. Standing back surveying, choosing a spot of color and then running to the canvas to put the color where it fits. The constant motion from far away -- surveying the whole picture -- then close up laying in the colors and texture and then back again. Did the artist have the whole picture in his/her mind before starting? Or did the picture unfold as the painting progressed? How did this artist decide when the painting was finished?

This story is a metaphor for my unfolding story as a teacher/researcher. I began this journey of wonder thinking about artworks and the stories they tell. I wondered about children and how they experienced their first years at school. I wondered about how each child could express his/her story within the institution of school. How could children's voices be heard and their experiences shared? Through Art? Is Art another

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[1] This painting evokes memories of Bateson's (1994) work on peripheral vision for me. "Sometimes change is directly visible, but sometimes it is apparent only to peripheral vision, altering the meaning of the foreground" (p. 6).

language for learning? This then is the research puzzle, a puzzle that lives in my teaching. My puzzle is an exploration of the possibilities for children's artistic expressions in curriculum making. In order to do this I need first to explore who I am as a curriculum maker (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992).

At times I wondered about myself as teacher and what narrative threads (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) defined my teaching life. I explored methodology and programs thinking these will make the learning experience better for children. I implemented new programs, new curricula, reevaluated my own teaching methods and wondered "am I an effective teacher?" I wondered about schools and school landscapes; and even schools on the bigger landscape of society. I thought of many children -- then of myself as a child. As I examined my narrative threads I acknowledged my interest in women's stories. My grandmothers' tales revealed a feminist perspective for me. I thought of my own, my mother's, my grandmothers', my daughters' and my students' experiences of school. I go back and forth, pulling away, zooming in, choosing colors and textures to add to my unfolding picture. I do not have an end goal of what my picture will look like. But, I hope that with fresh eyes or peripheral vision I will see a picture emerge as my landscape is co-constructed among my students and myself. It is from co-constructing the landscape and then stepping backward and forward as I study the landscape that I will learn more about children's artistic expressions in curriculum making in our classroom. It is a narrative inquiry into my experiences as a curriculum maker.

Painting as a process: A research study takes form through underpainting

When I begin a painting I have an idea of what the subject will be -- a landscape, a flower, a person, but I do not know what form the finished project will be. I have in my

repertoire a variety of skills (techniques and understandings) and materials (paints, brushes, papers, etc.) that will enable me to create a painting. I lightly sketch in the lines for the form and lay in the base colors paying close attention to where light falls and where shadows will need to be. When working with acrylics I attend to the form, shape and base colors. This type of underpainting[2] is described in the contemporary novel, *The Underpainter* (Urquhart, 1997). The novel features an elderly man's reflections on his life, his paintings, and the people who impacted his life. He confronts his past and acknowledges his present as he finishes off the last of his life's work. He is an impressionist abstract painter who painstakingly observes and prepares the 'under' or the background of his paintings and attends to the narrative of each piece and then carefully and deliberately obliterates the underpainting by applying layers and layers of paint and texture on top. Urquhart explains this process as laying in forms, details and colors, all of which form the base of the painting. The overpainting is the color, texture, line and overall impression the viewer sees. The underpainting, although not clearly visible, brings life to the finished painting by providing luminosity, form or distinction through shadows and shape.

It is this definition of underpainting that I use when looking at the narrative beginnings and experiences of a teacher's and students' lives. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) wrote, "clues to the personal are obtained from one's history, from how one thinks and feels, and from how one acts" (p. 25). As I tell my teaching stories, I find I continually look to the past, to the stories of my childhood, to the stories of my children, my mother, even my grandmothers. Their stories are all emerging and tell of how I have

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[2] The old masters would start painting by laying down a monochrome underpainting in dilute washes of burnt umber. This underpainting acted as a guide to the tonal values of the painting, mapping out areas of dark and light and thereby helping in the mixing of colors as the painting proceeds. Definition taken from Art School: a complete painters course (P. Monahan, 2000).

come to my way of knowing, my "personal practical knowledge". (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988, p. 25) My life as teacher/researcher has been strongly influenced by my grandmothers and my relationship to them both. Stories told of, and by, my grandmothers have underpainted who I am today. The stories of my past have been told and retold. These stories serve to shape, define and color the work I do today, just as they will continue to do so in the future.

We moved to Granny Stevens' street when I was only three years old. This is when I began almost a decade of daily visits to Granny's house. Granny lived only three doors down. Close enough for me to safely go on my own, yet far enough away for a three year old to really feel like she was going on an adventure of her own, exercising new found and growing independence. Her little house down the street was my sacred place; a sanctuary away from the boisterousness of my older brothers at home.

I loved going to Granny's house. Everything about Granny fascinated me; her house, the way she looked, her habits and routines, but most of all her stories. Stepping across Granny's verandah was like entering a magical place from another place and time; a place so different from my parents' home full of modern efficiencies. My senses were embraced by the many sights, sounds and smells of Granny's warm welcoming house. White muslin curtains hanging tidily in the verandah windows; green ivy creeping up the walls and trailing all around the edge of the ceiling; geraniums blooming brightly on window ledges; the smell of tea, fresh baked bread and grandpa's cigars; but, most of all, Granny's smile and look of surprise. "Look who's here, why it's a breath of Spring!" She always made me feel as though my visit was an unexpected delight; cause to stop and enjoy a chat over a cup of sweet milky tea. She would put the kettle on her big old converted wood stove, pull out her china cups, set the table for tea and then perch on

the edge of her chair to tell a story or two. It was at Granny's table I first experienced the pleasure and joy of shared storytelling, of being listened to and understood.

Granny had predictable long established routines that underwrote her days -- rituals from a different place and time than mine. Tea time, daily bread baking, airing the bed linens in a warming cupboard, beating carpets outdoors to clean them, scrubbing on a scrub board and attending to her toiletries were all long standing rituals. I loved being at my Granny's on the days she washed her hair. On hair washing days I recollect, I would sit at the big wooden kitchen table, swinging my legs under my chair, sipping my 'hot' tea and observing as the ritual unfolded. Granny hauled buckets of water in from the garden rain barrel, pouring the water carefully through a piece of flannel to filter out any impurities. She then began heating large pots of water on the stove until it was just right. Then she would arrange her tools: a white enamel basin, soft flannel cloths, lavender scented shampoo, ancient combs, and brushes all laid out on the table. With everything ready she would let her hair down (literally and figuratively), begin washing her hair and tell me stories. Stories of her home would begin "when I was a young girl....." and thus her stories would transport me to the sea, the lush gardens of her English home, the antics of her sisters and brothers and even a trip to see the queen.

Granny set the stage for my childhood fantasies of royalty by describing kings and queens, fancy clothes and crown jewels and the imagined world of the royals that her sisters and brothers playacted in their youth. I loved to hear the story of Granny as a child eagerly anticipating the queen's visit. Her rushing to get a good seat next to the road; the building anticipation and excitement of the crowd; the clattering of horses' hooves as the carriage and the guards rounded the corner; and finally the wrenching disappointment of seeing the queen -- "she was just an old woman, all dressed in black, sitting in the carriage, not even smiling -- like a big black crow!" The power of words to stimulate the imagination and bring pictures of other worlds to mind was first established

for me at Granny's table. Granny's tale would often end at about the same time she was plaiting her long steely gray locks and winding it across the top of her hair and pinning it securely. As she would clean up she would often remark, "You must think I am old -- I'm not you know -- I'm just a girl inside." Then she would laugh and her eyes would twinkle. I believed her! When she told her stories she was forever a young girl. For me, this is the power of stories -- the power to tell about who we are, where we have been and how we view the world. Granny viewed her world through the lens of a "Victorian Lady" and, through her, I experienced some of that world too.

Granny encouraged and appreciated my childish creations and dabbling in the arts. She proudly displayed my 'stitchings' and supported my hobbies with gifts of fabrics, buttons and bits of leftover yarns as well as 'pin' money for adding ribbons, lace and beautiful threads to my collection of artful treasures. I began the expression of my artistic self in the pursuit of a 'lady's' art. I happily stitched, knitted, embroidered and sewed away many a happy afternoon on Granny's verandah. The link to my present day appreciation of all forms of art and an interest in self--expression and creativity may have begun with Granny. My present day watercolor paintings evoke, for me, a sense of Granny in her garden and how her tales have underpainted my life.

Home is where we would travel for holidays, Christmases and summer vacations. My mother would delightedly announce "we're going home to see mom!" as she packed and prepared us all for the journey across the Saskatchewan prairie to the house on the farm where my other grandmother lived. This pronouncement sounded a bit strange to my child's ears. I wondered why my mom thought of home as being on the farm and not where we were right now. My mom would say the farm is home for us all.

I looked forward to these trips to my other grandma's. Grandma Karin's home was also a world entirely different from my parent's. Clucking brightly colored chickens,

cocky roosters and velvet nosed horses were there to greet us as we turned up the dirt drive. Grandma would be scurrying about the huge farm kitchen setting the table with trays laden with delicious food anticipating everyone's arrival. And it was 'everyone' too! Aunts, uncles and cousins would converge at Grandma's to spend the holidays. Hugs and kisses, love and laughter would fill the room to the brim. To a quiet and shy little girl these initial greetings were almost too much. I would often escape to the seat on Grandma's step stool and survey the procedure from the safety of a small space between the wall and the freezer. I liked to be the quiet observer at Grandma's, the observer of choreographed efficiency.

Grandma Karin was the matriarch of a family of energetic, efficient and very capable girls. She would scurry around her huge kitchen, her tiny arthritic feet fairly flying, about the kitchen directing everyone. She was a demanding taskmaster, but she lead by her own example of hard work and efficiency. We were all constantly reminded there was no reason for laziness or sloth, hands and feet and minds were to be kept busy. On the farm there was always work to be done, even little hands were no exception. If peas needed shelling, all the little ones had to sit on the step and shuck peas and whistle while we worked. I think Grandma was also pretty cagey. The whistling kept us from eating the peas as well as gave her an audible clue of where we were and what we were up to.

I grew up on stories my mom and aunts told of Grandma's efficiency, hard work and resourcefulness. Perhaps all of the efficiency came out of necessity. Raising a large family mostly on her own during and just after the depressed financial years of the 1930's required hard work to survive. There is a folk song written by an Australian group called "The Waifs" that could have been written about Grandmother. The woman in the song, "Gillian" (Cunningham, 1996), is a hard worker who is up before dawn each day

having completed a hundred tasks before most people are even up. 'Work is how she gets things done, work is how she has her fun..."

In the evenings when all the chores were done and Grandma could finally sit down, she would pull out her handiwork; knitting, crocheting, needlepoint, embroidery, etc. Before severe arthritis robbed her of this pleasure, Grandma Karin's handwork was famous. Her linens had no discernible right side, her knitted goods had perfect tension, her patterns always perfect. She not only aimed for perfection but also speed -- she was never one to dawdle. As a little girl, Grandma's beautiful linens and handiwork fascinated me. She showed me how to knit, crochet and embroider. She even allowed me the privilege of working on tea towels or aprons.

As a little girl I thought I had found my artistic niche in sewing and embroidery. I would save my allowance money to buy embroidery patterns and beautiful threads. Woolworth's department store was one of the places I could walk on my own. Clutching my allowance money in my hand, I would peer over the tall counters, carefully studying the colors before choosing just the right shade or hue. My Mom had tremendous patience for my stitching and allowed me the freedom to sew on her electric machine when I was only six. She also never complained about my 'lint factory'. She tolerated the bits of thread and lint spilling out of my room.

I remember passionately wanting beautiful sheets and pillowcases for my bed. My Mom gave me a white sheet and pillowcase and I began the painstaking process of stitching a brightly colored pattern of daisy chains, French knots and satin stitches across the hems. I could not have been very old because I can still remember sitting in the living room chair, my feet stuck out straight in front of me and the sheet covering my legs while I worked. I worked for many days and many hours on my project. I was tremendously proud of each brightly colored stitch.

Grandma Karin seldom left the farm, but on one occasion I remember she was coming for a rare visit to our house. I wanted to surprise and impress her with my handiwork. I have to say I failed miserably at the 'impress her' part. She looked closely at the top sheet and turned it over in her hand from side to side. She noticed the puckers, the dangling threads on the back and the irregular stitches. I could tell because she stretched at the fabric and tried to smooth places with her fingers. Her lasting comment; was that, "The sign of good work is there should be no difference between the front and the back."

Happily she did not totally dissuade me from continuing to pursue my own self-expression through handiwork and art -- but she has left a lasting impression on me to always work towards quality. I have in my possession a beautifully embroidered linen tablecloth, a treasure my eldest daughter gave me after her visit to my grandmother's ancestral home in Denmark. A treasure, because this tablecloth was hand embroidered by my Grandmother when she was about fourteen years old. I have looked closely at the stitches and studied both sides of the cloth. There is no discernible difference! I have marveled at the excellence of her work and thanked her in my heart for modeling how to set high standards for myself and how to achieve through hard work. Grandma Karin has been gone for many years now but still, if my Mom says, "Your grandma would be proud of you." I know that is high praise indeed.

The stories I tell of my experiences with my grandmothers are part of my underpainting; part of my picture of self as teacher/researcher. These past experiences and stories are part of my ways of knowing. These stories are expressed outwardly in my present day mind and body. They continue to shape my future plans and actions. Through these stories I learned to love story as a means of knowing and understanding myself and others. I have the example of hard work and effort to live up to. My

Grandmothers' examples taught me the power of discernment and how to set high standards of quality in my work. I have an awareness of the importance of a place to belong and the need for us all to have sacred spaces. I was fortunate enough to have lived my childhood in the presence of caring and attentive adults. These ideals form some of my story, the story by which I live.

Stories of my school days: A layer of underpainting attending to shadows and light

It is a strange thing that I became a teacher because I never really liked school. I was a quiet, shy, hesitant, but 'good' little girl in class. I had difficulty finding my voice at school. I began reading, but nobody knew. I recall in first grade eagerly anticipating the first library visit. All those books to read! The teacher showed us where the books for the grade one students were. One lowly little bottom shelf was relegated to the little kid books. Easy, little kid books. I wanted a book just out of my reach; the title "Pollyanna" printed on the spine. I started to pull over a ladder to reach the book. The teacher's authoritative voice stopped me in my tracks, " Cheryl, what are you doing? The books for you are here." I dutifully chose a book from the bottom shelf.

After several disappointing visits, I tried again. My teacher stopped me just as my hand had grabbed hold of the spine of that elusive book. "These books are for the older children that know how to read." The book went back on the shelf.

It was months before I got up the courage to try again. My teacher stopped me again. For some reason this time was different. She must have seen the disappointment in my eyes and the slump of my spine. This time she said, "If you can read a page, I'll let you take it home." She held the book open to somewhere in the middle. I took a breath and, in a whisper voice, I began to read. I got to take the book home.

Moving when I was in grade six was extremely difficult for me. It was only across the city but it meant a new school, new teachers, and new kids. On the first day of school when the teacher entered the classroom he walked by me and pulled my hair (which was up in two pigtails) and called me "Red". When he was doing attendance and came to my name he said, "We can't call you Cheryl, we already have a Cheryl, you'll have to be ..... Cherry, cherry red like your hair." And then he laughed along with the rest of the kids. I guess he thought it was funny. I didn't laugh. The only thing that was cherry red were my burning cheeks. Children being quick to mimic, followed his example and pulled my hair and teased me at recess that day, the next day and for many days after. I found it difficult to feel the least bit friendly towards children who were pulling my hair and calling me "cherry' or "red". I never said anything at home or at school about the teasing. My Dad had enough to worry about. My childhood had been marked by long periods of time when my Mom was hospitalized. She was away for much of that school year. I don't think my teachers even knew.

My older brothers were a tough act to follow in school. One brother was bright, articulate, and a model student. The other brother made his way by being outspoken, abrasive and a continual irritant to his teachers. I followed the irritating brother through school. Most of my teachers expected me to be like one or the other of my brothers. I remember particularly the first day of algebra in high school. I entered the classroom and took a seat near the front and just to the side as I usually did. The teacher came in and started to take the roll call. He called each name and greeted each student with a welcome or a smile. My name was called and there was a long pause, then the question;" Are you Mark's sister?" I answered, "Yes." The teacher then told me in no uncertain terms to go and sit at the back of the room and not talk unless I was spoken to.

There I stayed the rest of the term, ignored, quiet and frustrated. However, I did manage to read a lot of novels that term.

Not all my stories of school are negative. One teacher I had in high school took the time to get to know each of the students as people. She happened to be the Home Economics teacher. Because I was a pretty good seamstress and had already completed many quilts, clothes, toys, dolls, etc. I think she recognized a kindred spirit in me. I spent many of my spares and breaks in the home ec. room, sharing ideas, completing projects and finding my voice. I felt cared about, listened to and part of a trusting relationship.

Nel Noddings (1992) speaks about caring and the relational aspects of teaching and parenting. She too draws on her own personal experience as a mother/teacher and defines caring as "requiring address and response that starts with the constructing of trusting relationships and works continually to build on this foundation of trust" (p *xii*). When working with my students in my present day classroom I recall that feeling of security and belonging and try to recreate this same feeling for them.

Stories of parenting: Underpainting another layer, creating texture

I was a young mom. Barely more than a child myself when I look back; although I did not feel overly young at the time. I learned about parenting; partially through reading (looking to the experts); partially through the advice of well meaning friends and relatives (the power of story as a means to learn); partially through my own memory and experiential learning; and partially through constructing and negotiating the relationship with my children as they grew (learning by doing). Somehow, we muddled through successfully.

When my children were small we had a very 'busy household' as my mother described it. We were always in the middle of some sort of creative 'mess'. I liked to have my children underfoot as we played and created things together. We would rearrange furniture to make castles, forts and houses, create puppets and put on plays as well as color, draw and paint with wild abandon.

One very hot summer day my girls wanted something 'fun' to do. I had a large roll of paper that I had obtained from the local newspaper office so I took it outside for them to paint on. Because a gusty breeze kept flipping the paper up, we decided to staple paper to the fence and paint it there. I carefully stapled a fairly large piece of paper to the fence. Very quickly they filled that piece and wanted more. Soon the whole length of paper had been hung all around the perimeter of our yard and several of the neighborhood kids had come to join the painting frenzy. And painting frenzy it was. Rainbow hued paint was dabbed on, brushed on, splattered on, then almost thrown on the paper with a resulting canvas of pure delightful color. An impressionistic work of a colorful flower garden joyful in its sense of playfulness, spontaneity and abandon. I loved the finished product, but the finished product did not matter as much to the children. They quickly moved on to the next experience; the pleasure of cleaning up after painting with the garden hose and sprinkler. The process and the pleasure of the experience still stand out in the minds of my children as they recall this day in their childhood.

I came into the teaching profession later in my life. When I made the decision to go back to university and work on an education degree, my two daughters were already six and nine years old. Being a parent and living with young children while studying education had a phenomenal impact on what I was learning. I was drawn to early childhood and the focus on learning through play. This methodology seemed to make sense to me, because it was what I was living. This was one time when duality of roles was an advantage.

Attending to the subject of the painting: The context of me as teacher/researcher

The subject of the painting in the introductory story is a prairie landscape. I am a child of the prairies. Sweet grass, gophers, grasshoppers, crows, scrubby brush, shallow sloughs, land as far as you can see. Land and sky merging in a seemingly infinite space. Big skies, big spaces, wide open. This is the physical landscape on which I grew up and storied myself as child, student, teacher and researcher. The term "landscape' is used by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) as a way of describing a place that is the "interface of theory and practice in teacher's lives." They write that using the landscape metaphor enables them to understand and contextualize research findings of teacher's personal practical knowledge. The landscape allows them and me to talk about space, place and time. A landscape is full of possibilities and filled with different people all in differing relationships.

> Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. We see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places and things, we see it as both an intellectual and moral landscape. (p. 5)

My personal and professional knowledge has been storied on, and by, the prairie landscape. As I examine and reflect on the many narrative threads of my life I am beginning to understand how much the prairie landscape has influenced and been a part of my personal and professional knowledge.

I recall a rutted road in the painting I first described, not clearly paved or well traveled, but there, nonetheless. Two little parallel paths - an axle width apart perhaps

made by a wagon, tractor, truck or car. The small kind of indistinct roadways I still encounter on the prairies when I am lucky enough to get off the beaten and well traveled paths. As a child I remember meandering down these roadways. Sometimes carefully following the left side, sometimes following the right. On rainy days the roadways can be slippery and full of holes. On hot sunny days the roadways are dusty and dry. My life journey is much like the road in the painting -- rutted and indistinct in some places, pot holes here and there, parts more well traveled, more public, other parts just barely visible, private.

A roadway has two parallel paths that travel alongside each other, each one dependent and influenced by the other. I also have two parallel paths in my life each greatly influencing the other. I am both a parent and a teacher. My parental life has influenced my teaching life and my teaching life my parenting. Intellectually I know that two parallel lines never meet, they travel onward into infinity never crossing or converging, staying on separate paths. But as an artist and a child of the prairies I have seen the parallel lines meet -- on the horizon -- and converge into one. As I live and tell my teaching stories I draw upon my personal experiences as well as my teaching experiences. These are two parallel stories that cannot be separated. They do converge and meet. My personal practical knowledge is who I am, shaped by all of my experiences, over time, in all the places I have lived on this prairie landscape.

I have walked down the metaphorical road in my own life in different ways. Sometimes both feet on one side of the road, other times both feet crossing to the other and even at times struggling to keep one foot planted squarely on each side of the road at the same time. This feeling of duality expresses itself in many places in my life, as personal/professional; parent/teacher; and as researcher/participant.

Beginning a new canvas: Painting a picture of curriculum making through inquiry

In narrative inquiry we acknowledge that the people on a landscape have storied lives. However, we must also acknowledge that schools, the building as well as the school is also storied. Stories of school and schooling are underpainted by the mores of society in general, history, politics and religions. I acknowledge these, but do not wish this work to be about the merits and understandings of how schools have developed into the institutions they are. I want to acknowledge history as it pertains to the research story as it unfolds.

The Underpainting

Victoria School is a unique and interesting place; as far as I know there is not another school like it anywhere in North America. The closest model is, perhaps, the Julliard School in New York City. Victoria School, one of the oldest schools in the city of Edmonton, has a lengthy history. The original school was established over ninety years ago. I get a sense of the school's history when I walk into the school's museum. The walls are lined with photos, trophies, team jackets, and mementos from high school students of decades past. Crumbling brittle-paged text books, obsolete teaching materials, trophies inscribed with names of students from long ago (some present day famous people) and other articles that date from the time of my grandparents, parents and my own high school years. This school building had evolved from a respected model of progressive education in its early days to a crumbling inner city school inherent with inner city problems. Until recently that was the story. The student population was dwindling, the building crumbling, and respect for its heritage was lost. The school had a reputation of being a place for tough kids in a tough neighborhood. There was even talk of school closure and demolition of the building.

About fifteen years ago a forward thinking principal began the pursuit of his personal goal and dream; the establishment of a school that would encompass and integrate all the performing and visual arts combined with a strong academic focus. A school that would house students from kindergarten through grade twelve. The vision for this school was a model of arts integration providing students with exemplary teaching and new opportunities to explore and pursue their dreams through the arts.

The school started out with programming for grade ten, eleven and twelve students. This was expanded to include grade nine students, then both grade seven and eight students in subsequent years. About seven years ago the first elementary students came to Victoria School, two classes of grade six and two of grade five. Since then the school has again expanded and now includes kindergarten through grade twelve. As I write this, the primary year program now, in its fifth year, has expanded to two classes at each grade, k-3 and three classes of each grade 4-6.

This is the landscape on which I reside as a teacher of grade one students. The dream of what Victoria School can be is what originally drew me to this place. I was enticed by the story of an integrated arts style of education, a place where uniqueness, individuality and personal gifts are honored, a place that welcomes children of all ages, a place where talents are given an opportunity to shine.

The past has had much bearing on my feelings, thoughts and expectations about the move and change; in order to understand the effects this change of location had on me I needed to explore my teaching past. I had been at my last school for nine very satisfying years. This particular school had five different principals while I was there. I felt I had made many changes and adaptations. I had changed grade levels from grade one to grade two; then I implemented combined groupings. I had grown and changed; studied and learned and developed as a teacher. I was comfortable and respected in this place. Many of the staff, children and their families were like my extended family.

When I walked in the front doors, I felt embraced by the contributions I had made to this school, everything from teddy bear tapestry-covered chairs and wall murals to philosophical contributions that helped define the organization of this school. I was comfortable there.

Despite this in my last year there, I had a nagging feeling that it was time to expand my horizons. As an undergraduate I recall reading these words; "In order to be a good teacher you need to be teaching what you are on the edge of learning yourself " (source unknown). These words have shaped my professional life as a teacher. Learning for life and inquiry has been a story of teaching for me. I always knew that I would not be satisfied staying in one place, one school, one grade for the whole of my teaching career. As a rookie teacher I heeded the advice of a seasoned veteran. Teachers should force themselves to make a change at least every five years so that they do not stagnate, get bored and lose sight of why they chose teaching as a profession in the first place. I was ready for change and the thought of moving to an innovative school was exhilarating. Friends, family and colleagues all supported my decision to move because in their words "it was the perfect fit" for me.

I have taught at Victoria School for the past three years. I have come to appreciate the struggle a large school has to create a sense of community or to allow an expression of voice to all its participants. Little voices and little people can be easily overlooked or unheard in this place. It is my intent to listen carefully to the children and their stories on this landscape. This research is about listening to the children and their stories as we engaged in curriculum making together.

Victoria School is in the process of becoming a fully approved International Baccalaureate School from kindergarten through grade twelve. In addition to teaching the mandated Alberta Provincial Curriculum, The International Baccalaureate Organization has several requirements that the teachers and children must meet. The

Primary Years Program (PYP)[3] is an international curriculum framework designed for children between the ages of 3 and 12 years. The PYP promotes the construction of knowledge and promotes inquiry as a pedagogical approach. In the primary years the focus is on 'inquiry' as a method for delivering instruction and for learning. The curriculum framework is an expression and extension of three interrelated questions: What do we want to learn? How best will we learn? "How will we know what we have learned?" The PYP aims to have students demonstrate the attributes and dispositions that characterize successful students. These globally minded young people are inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well balanced and reflective. The International Baccalaureate Organization requires six units of structured inquiry be taught at each of the grade levels (K-5) over the course of a year. These same global concepts lead each of the six inquiry units: who we are; where we are in time and place; how we express ourselves; how the world works; how we organize ourselves and how we share the planet.

The PYP and the Alberta Provincial Curriculum are a good fit. The two have many areas of overlap and many Science and Social Studies units can be taught as units of inquiry. Inquiry as used and understood by myself in the context of this school and in this place and time is stated in *Learning Together Through Inquiry.* "Inquiry is not a new set of procedures or lesson plans..." but rather " a way of thinking about curriculum with our students in a way that enables them to find and examine questions significant in their lives" (Shorte & Harste , 1996, p. 22).

[3] www.ibo.org/pyp.htm

Creating a new canvas

Just as I have a narrative past full of storied experience, so too do the children who come to my classroom. As I think hard about the curriculum being constructed in the classroom I look beyond the surface and attend to the underpaintings (the deeper meaning) of the children's lives. I do this to create a space for their voices, so their voices will not be obscured by the 'busy'ness of school life. I take notice of their involvement and contributions in curriculum making.

Because I am both teacher and researcher in my classroom I am both a part of the process and observer of the process. My first task as a teacher/researcher was to be first and foremost a "kidwatcher". Harste and Shorte (1996) define kidwatching as learning to see what is there and using that information to create a better classroom (p 64). The secret perhaps lies in asking myself "what is there?" and then using this knowledge to support the children in their curriculum making. In this first sketchbook I asked the "what is there?" question of myself and have explored my own narrative underpaintings. I did this before I began this inquiry and again throughout the inquiry and as I wrote about the inquiry. As I taught I undertook the task of serious kidwatching and attended wholly to the children's underpaintings. I wondered if these stories influenced how they proceeded into the inquiry and directed how they made meaning of curriculum.

As I revisit the research puzzle in this inquiry I see it is an exploration of the convergence of my personal and my professional stories and my students' stories on the landscape of a place called school. I wanted to inquire into how our separate stories, these narrative underpaintings, mesh together and become the ways we make meaning of curriculum in our grade one classroom. I wondered how our understandings are expressed. As I inquired into my own teaching and learning alongside my students, I hoped to capture an impression of life lived in the classroom.

Because I wanted to study my experiences of co-constructing curriculum with my students I selected narrative inquiry, a kind of research centered in and around relationship. The relationship between teacher and students is an experiential one. I take the idea of curriculum as being "something experienced in situations" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 6) and the situation being composed of persons interacting in a fluid and dynamic way, with new situations arising out of preceding situations and new situations affecting the future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, pp. 6-9) Using the narrative inquiry framework and the concept of a three-dimensional landscape space allowed me to enter the landscape and be visible through my stories. I did not need to merely observe. I acknowledged my storied experiences as teacher/researcher on the school landscape. I attended to the children's storied experiences as they engaged in making meaning from curriculum. Narrative inquiry was a way for me to attend to their stories and mine and to look at this student/teacher relationship.

Capturing the impressions

This narrative inquiry was conducted in my grade one classroom, a classroom consisting of a homogeneous group of twenty children and myself as teacher. The focus of the unit undertaken in the inquiry was the grade one science unit, "Building Things" from Alberta Education's program of studies. Approximately six to eight weeks was initially set out for completing the unit. The children in this particular grade one classroom have had some opportunities to be involved in previous units of inquiry. The

language of inquiry is not entirely new to them, therefore, when I invited the children into my inquiry, they were familiar with an inquiry process.

I was interested in learning about myself as a teacher, the children's thinking and how curriculum and schooling come together into one experience that we call learning. I was interested in allowing the children to question and explore their environment, schooling and their own learning process. To begin the research I invited the children into my research puzzle.

The Invitation

"Come learn alongside me. Together we will inquire into what interests us. We will learn about how things are made, what they are made of, and maybe build a thing or two. I want to write a story about what we are doing. Will you help me? We can take pictures of what we are doing -- the important stuff. You can use my camera to help us remember what we did."

This invitation was extended to the children to be co-learners with me on an inquiry journey; a journey that would allow me to explore my interests and passions as a teacher. At the beginning I had not yet clearly defined the form and shape of teaching this unit or what my research would look like. However, I had laid out before me an idea of the subject of the picture, the tools I would use and skills as both teacher and researcher to draw upon. The difficulty of being both teacher and researcher at one and the same time required improvisation for collecting data. For example, the 'busy'ness of life in the classroom and the excessive demands on a teacher's time, especially at a school like Victoria School, required me to improvise and adapt my own teacher/researcher journaling and reflecting. Photography proved to be my favorite

instrument for collecting data or field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Photographs, taken by children, the teacher, as well as some taken by parents, form some of the field text.

Photography provided me with a timely and efficient tool to use. The camera helped capture the events as they unfolded. Pictures could be taken quickly in the midst of a busy and hectic school day. For me, each photograph is embedded with the richness of stories and wonders that were part of this experience. These photographs provide a stimulus for the students and myself to engage in reflection.

Other forms of field texts were collected for use in this study. These included taped conversations among children, writing/art samples, teacher journal pages, classroom newsletters, and artifacts. My conversations with Pam, a good friend, research support person and university colleague provided me with opportunities to reflect, question and think about what I was noticing and observing with the children. The children's work samples provided a place for the story to unfold and supported the photographs. Excerpts from the children's dialogue journals, samples of work from science clipboards, notes, and drawings also help to paint a picture of the collaboration that existed. Weekly classroom newsletters provide a window into the other goings on in the classroom. Excerpts from my teacher's journal, notes and plan book are also used as field text.

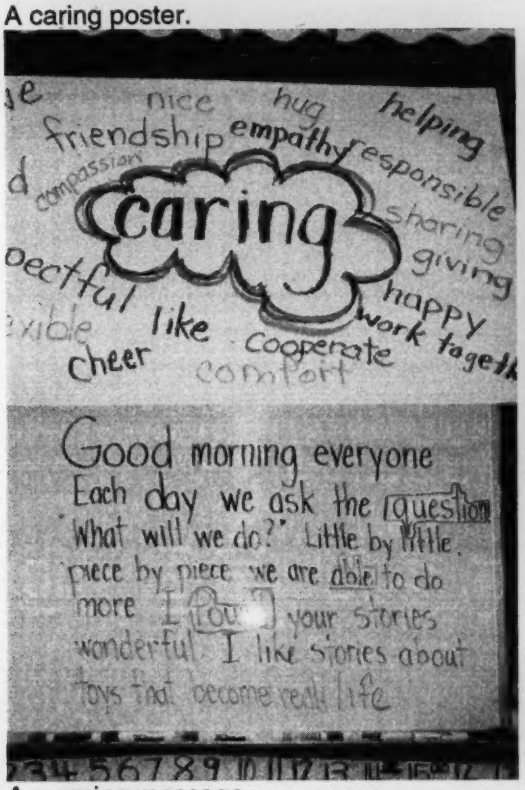
After the invitation was extended to the children, a brief explanation on the use and care of a digital camera followed and I took a few demonstration photographs. I have blurred the children's faces in the photographs to protect their identities.

I placed the camera on my desk and invited the children to pick it up and take photographs as they needed to. Some of the children were very excited about taking photos and quickly rushed over to use the camera. The very first photograph taken was of our classroom dragon, Anastasia, who sits on the classroom bookshelves.

In the first few days following the invitation the children were very interested in taking photographs of 'things' at school, things that interested them and told about our

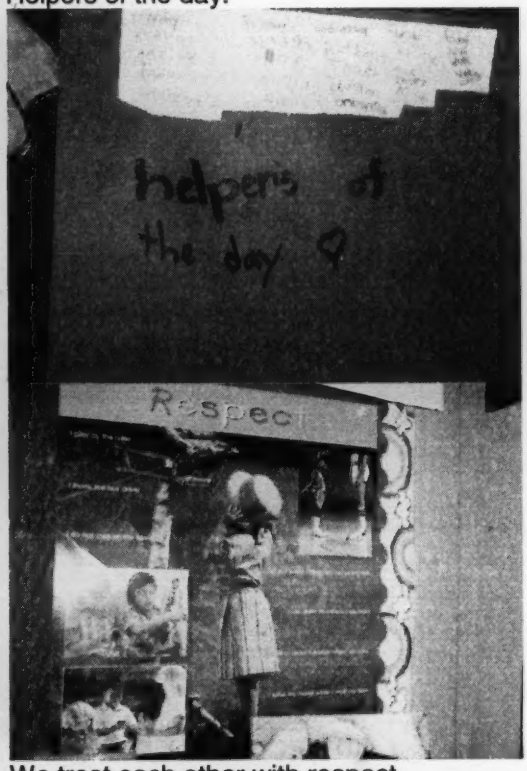
class, our classroom and what we learn at school. Our word wall, charts, pictures on the wall, and a number line were all subjects of the initial photos.

A caring poster.



A morning message

Helpers of the day.



We treat each other with respect

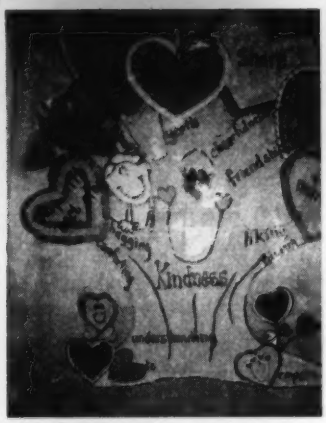
Most of the children were very thoughtful and contemplated what they would take a picture of before taking the camera. Austin, for example, felt it was very important to take a picture symbolic of lunch. He arranged a photograph of a lunch being heated up in the microwave oven. Since his lunch that day was not a micro-waveable one, he borrowed Katherine's lunch, set it in the classroom microwave and then came to get the camera. Children collaborated and helped each other. Katherine posed for one of the children at her locker, her back is turned and she is pretending to hang up her coat; perhaps this is representative of the many comings and goings of a school day; recesses, lunch, home time. Some of the photographs recorded activities and materials

we used, while others were of classroom charts and or pictures. There is a picture of the word wall that has been developing over the year. The spot in which it is taken was very carefully chosen however, it shows the letter 'h' and underneath the word 'happy'. The first word that we learned together at school. A photograph of our kindness tree – a collection of words – compiled by the entire group – demonstrates how we treat each other. Pictures of our daily number line demonstrate the passage of time, seasons and a record of special events, as well as how far we have come together.

Lunch time

Lockers

The word wall



A kindness tree

How many days at school? Our number line.

Weekly, I would take my camera home and print the pictures. These pictures were then brought back to the classroom and laid out on a table in the classroom. Children, parents, teachers, or classroom visitors looked at the pictures, discussed them, questioned and told stories about them. Initially the photos were loose pages on the table, but as the collection grew I placed the photos in a binder. The photos were not arranged in any chronological order as they were reordered regularly. Often children would open up the binder and spread photos out on the table.

Conversations around the photos were lively and spirited. In an attempt to capture these conversations, without the presence of a teacher hovering nearby, I placed a tape recorder on the table. These first recordings were unintelligible due to the background noises and excited all-at-once chatter that surrounded the table. There were several conversations and stories all being told at the same time and the threads of these were impossible to follow. I had to improvise. I would note on the backs of photographs, using yellow sticky notes, any snippets of conversation, questions or even words I had overheard as notes to my self to remember for later. Pam, my university colleague, came to the classroom as a friendly visitor. She would sit at a small table with the photographs spread before her and students would tell her about the photographs. In

the relative calmness of one adult with one or two children I was able to capture some conversations on tape.

Why Digital Photography as Field Text?

I chose digital photography as a means by which to compose field text because of its ease of use, success rate and the immediacy of feedback for the children. By eliminating the technological aspects of camera operation, focus, framing, lighting, zooming in or out, flash, etc. the children could attend to the subject of the photo and not to the complex technology of taking photos. The children also had immediate feed back when viewing the photograph. This allowed the children to evaluate and decide whether the photo captured what they wanted it to. Often the children would tell me why they took a picture at the time of taking it. Hearing their stories of what was important was central to the field text. These brief conversations were important. If we had waited for film to be finished, sent to be developed and printed, then brought back to the classroom, the storied importance of the photo would have been lost. Cost of gathering field text was also an important consideration. Film, batteries, developing costs, etc. add up quickly. With the digital images I was able to print them quickly and cheaply.

Perhaps the most significant consideration for choosing photography was the age of the children involved. I believe that young children often have very sophisticated and complicated ideas that they cannot readily share verbally, or in written form because of language and/or reading and writing skills that lag behind their thinking expressive skills. Photography captured in an instant what they were thinking, feeling or experiencing. The photos also provided a place for the children to be reflective and responsive about their classroom experiences. The photographs provided an impetus for the children to share with others our classroom story. The photos provided a safe and responsive space for the children to have a voice in the story telling about curriculum making.

The Children

As the teacher in this classroom it was my responsibility to focus on the needs of all the children in the class and to assure that they were a part of the building things unit. For the purposes of this study, not all the children's stories will be told. I chose a few of the children to tell the story as the curriculum making unfolded. The children featured in this study speak, in some ways, for all of the children. Within their individual stories are fragments from stories of each child within the whole group.

The children, all in their first year of grade one, represent a range of academic abilities and achievements. All of them have one common trait. Each child has a supportive family, parents who are interested in, and involved in, their child's education. The children's parents applied to get them into the program at Victoria School. An interest in the arts, academic ability and family support are the significant criteria considered in the applications.

The children whose voices seem to be heard above the others in this story of curriculum making are: Katherine, Terry, Sheldon, Heather, Erin, Ann, and Heidi. These names are pseudonyms. The number of females out number the males. This is representative of the demographics of this classroom. Some of these children have been a part of the Victoria school landscape for a longer period of time. Some of them have previous experiences with me as "teacher". I have been the teacher of their older siblings, the teacher on supervision in the playground and a teacher they often saw in the school hallways. Some of these children are new to the school landscape.

Ethical considerations

I entered this research with "an ethic that has fidelity to persons and the quality of relations at its heart" (Noddings, 1986, p. 498). Although all the children in the class

were involved in the unit of inquiry, I focused on the telling of the story around the lives of a few children. These children are representative of the demographics of the class. Gender, cultural group, academic achievement and verbal/nonverbal skill were considered when selecting the children. Informed consent and permission for use of personal narratives, work samples and photographs were obtained in writing from parents of the children involved. In order to protect the identity of the children and respect the confidential nature of shared stories, pseudonyms for the children are used. All children and families agreed to participate.

I worked to maintain a balance of my dual roles as teacher and researcher. Firstly, I was the teacher of all the children, and secondly I was a researcher. I was mindful of my teaching role as I planned, organized, prepared for and assessed my students' learning. As researcher, I asked questions, gathered data, listened to children and reflected on my own practice. I was both teacher and researcher as I worked alongside and in relation with the children. The Faculty of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board approved this research study.

Picking up the brush: Beginning a new painting

I have a beautiful hand knit sweater covered with a multitude of hearts in an array of rainbow colors. I wore it to school for the first time just following Halloween. As I was greeting my students at the door of the classroom, I overheard a little voice say, "Mrs. Weighill don't you think it's a bit late to be wearing your Halloween sweater?" I looked at the little girl who had posed the question, and said "Halloween?" Her response," Your sweater is covered in bats, why are you wearing that!"

I tell this story here as a reminder that my perspectives and my students' perspectives are shaped from differing experiences. She saw bats (perfectly understandable considering we had just celebrated Halloween) and I saw hearts. In this

study I thought about and remembered there is a multiplicity of perspectives. Each of these perspectives are underpainted by prior history and experience. These underpaintings provide luminosity to the shared experience of constructing meaning within curriculum. This narrative inquiry is a study of how a teacher and students make meaning of an experience by telling and retelling stories. I thought about the stories we told about ourselves, the stories we told of our experience and the stories we told others about our experience. After all, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) draw on John Dewey and write,

> thinking is inquiry, inquiry is life and life is education. When we bump into the obvious, it becomes a puzzle or a problem, and we think about it. Living is thinking and that is what education is all about. (p. 10)

The second sketch book is a narrative telling of the experience of constructing curriculum over a period of several weeks. I tell stories of what the students and I created and how we came to build a castle community.

Sketchbook Two

Like a painter brings a canvas to life through the stroke of a brush, I believe that children and a teacher bring curriculum to life through experience. In keeping with the original metaphor of a finished painting as composed of many layers or underpaintings I present here a special painting, a picture of a unique landscape; a picture of a special day, a special place and a special event. Using a painting as co-constructed by many artists, each of whom contributed layers, to the underpainting metaphor; it is layers that shaped the finished 'picture'. At first glance the completed painting obscures the underpaintings. They are there though, just below the surface. By peeling back the layers of paint, the work the artists, in this case the children and I, did to create their masterpiece is revealed. In the underpaintings, there are influences of narrative history, embodied knowledge, personal ways of knowing and the voices of many as they came together to provide this landscape with its glow, its luminosity.

The end is just the beginning. To gain understanding for the picture being created by this group of artists I begin with the end. The description of a co-constructed landscape in a grade one classroom, on a warm, sunny, day at the end of May is described below. Someone once told me a painting is never finished but rather a stoppage of work at an aesthetically pleasing point in the construction. Join us at just such a point in curriculum making. Imagine the scene....

The Painting

A roughly hewn castle stands in the corner overlooking the kingdom of Gradonea. It is a castle constructed of wood, cardboard, paint, rope, paper, nails, screws and tape. Standing on either side of the drawbridge are twin turrets; huge, sturdy, cardboard tubes, held together with duct tape and paper. The wooden drawbridge can be lowered and raised across a carefully painted moat by pulling on ropes. The walls are faux stone; cardboard sheets nailed to 2x4 frames that have been painted to resemble rough river stones. Alphabet tiles cover the floor. Miniature rooms made from boxes are nestled inside the castle. The king's quarters are opulent and splendid, befitting a miniature king. The stable houses the knight's miniature horse and gear. Two medieval guards stand watch over a cold and creepy looking dungeon. The castle's resident dragon sits atop a stone lair filled with treasure. Draping the walls are tapestries and flags resplendent with a variety of coats of arms. All are set against a fairy tale landscape.

A dragon's lair

The King's quarters

The stables for the knights horses

A gloomy , dank dungeon

In the castle courtyard a medieval feast is taking place. The regally robed king and queen of Gradonea sit proudly at their head table. Their crowns and jewels sparkle in the sunlight. The Lords and their Ladies sit at tables enjoying the entertainment of the traveling minstrel show. The musicians, gypsy dancers and singers astound the audience with their skills. Acrobats and jugglers perform amazing feats of dexterity and balance. The knights have laid down their swords and shields for awhile to enjoy the feasting and dancing. During breaks, the court jester has the crowd laughing uproariously at her jokes and antics. All the while,

a group of hard working servants keeps everyone's trenchers filled with a variety of delicious foods. A huge crowd of peasants surround the kingdom watching, showing their appreciation for all the Gradoneans by applauding and cheering.

The crudely built castle structure is the pride of a group of twenty grade one children and their teacher. The medieval feast is taking place at lunchtime. The children dressed in costumes depict a variety of medieval castle roles. They have invited a group of peasants, the children's families, to have lunch. The magical kingdom, Gradonea, was established and grew out of a co-constructed unit of inquiry. The end product was a wonderful culmination of several weeks of work for these students.

Starting the painting, Laying out the tools – What is the curriculum?

The building things unit of Alberta Education's Science curriculum came alive for a group of twenty grade one students and myself as their teacher as we co-constructed meaning within the curriculum. At the beginning of the building things science unit, the goal was not to end the unit with a castle construction and a medieval feast. Rather, the castle was the result of several weeks spent in a classroom with twenty children exploring how things are made, their personal stories, questions and interests, and a need to know. How did this unit evolve and take on the shape of a medieval castle?

In this narrative inquiry work I have had the task of being both participant and observer at one and the same time. As a method of separating out the telling

of the curriculum making story and my dual voices as teacher/researcher I use two types of font in this sketchbook. The italics are my "teacher voice' as participant and they separate my thoughts and wonders from the main body of the text. The regular font is my telling the 'story' of curriculum making as observer and researcher.

Before I begin a painting I assemble the materials and tools. I lay out my canvas, collect brushes and paints, and think about the subject of my painting. To plan the unit "Building Things" I did much the same. Firstly, I consulted the mandated curriculum. This curriculum provided the rudimentary tools from which to start.

This unit began much the same as any other unit I plan and prepare for. I began studying the specific curriculum objectives and learner expectations outlined in the government documents. Alberta Education's Program of Studies for Science states in its program overview a rationale for learning science that guided the unit.

The elementary Science program engages students in a process of inquiry and problem solving in which they develop both knowledge and skills. The purpose of the program is to encourage and stimulate children's learning by nurturing their sense of wonderment, by developing skill and confidence in investigating their surroundings and by building a foundation of experience and

understanding upon which later learning can be based. (*Program of Studies Elementary Schools: Science*, 1996, p. A1)

The science program of studies in Alberta is built on the following principles:

- Children's curiosity provides a natural starting point for learning.
- Children's learning builds on what they currently know and can do.
- Communication is essential for Science learning.
- Students learn best when they are challenged and actively involved.
- Confidence and self-reliance are important outcomes of learning.

The emphasis of the science program is on inquiry and problem solving. The ideology of this curriculum also meshes nicely with the International Baccalaureate Organization's (IBO) expectations for learning through inquiry. Each area of the curriculum provides a source for developing question, problems and or issues. These provide starting points for inquiry and problem solving. The learner expectations for the elementary science program are linked to two main areas of skill emphasis: science inquiry and problem solving through technology. Although the two skill areas seem to be related, the focus of each is different. In science inquiry the focus is on asking questions and finding answers based on evidence. The outcome of inquiry is knowledge. In problem solving, the focus is on practical tasks – finding ways of making and doing things to meet a given need, using available materials. The outcome of problem solving is a product or process that a person can use.

With these broad program goals in mind, I set out to plan and implement a unit of study that would meet the specific learner objectives for the grade one program of studies Building Things Unit. The overview of this unit states that:

> children learn about materials by using them to construct a variety of objects, including model buildings, toys, boats and vehicles. Students are to select materials to use and gain experience as they cut and shape, fold and pile materials on top of one another, join parts and try different techniques to achieve the result they intend. In the process they learn to look at objects that are similar to what they are trying to construct and, with guidance begin to recognize the component parts that make up the whole. (*Program of Studies Elementary Schools*, 1996, p. B. 3)

The General Learner Expectations of this unit are to:

- 1-7 construct objects and models of objects, using a variety of different materials.
- 1-8 Identify the purpose of different components in a personally constructed object or model, and identify corresponding components in a related object or model.

The Specific Learner Expectations

Students will:

1. Select appropriate materials such as papers, plastics, woods; and design and build objects, based on the following kinds of construction tasks:
   - Construct model buildings; e.g. homes (human, animal, from other cultures) garages , schools
   - Construct model objects; e.g. furniture, equipment, boats, vehicles
   - Construct toys; e.g pop-ups, figures
   - Construct wind- and water-related artifacts; e.g dams, water wheels, boats
2. Identify component parts of personally constructed objects, and describe the purpose of each part.
3. Compare two objects that have been constructed for the same purpose, identify the parts in one object that correspond to parts in another, and identify similarities and differences between these parts.
4. Recognize that products are often developed for specific purposes and identify the overall purpose for each model and artifact constructed. (*Program of Studies Elementary Schools*, 1996, pp. 3-4)

With program rationales, philosophy as well as general and specific learner expectations clear in my mind, I set about the task of planning for the unit. I knew I wanted to invite the children to be close observers of their environment and learn to look closely at how things are made. I wanted them to notice that different materials were used for different things for a variety of reasons. I wanted them to encounter problems that would need solving throughout the unit. It was important to me that there was room within this inquiry for the children to ask questions and pursue what was important to each of them personally. I wanted them to apply new found knowledge and skills to the building of "something". The "something" was to be of the children's choosing.

I tried to anticipate some of the questions the children might have and began gathering the materials and resources I thought we would need. In the library I found a wide range of books, both fiction and non-fiction books on a variety of topics. I chose a variety on topics that included everything from artists, inventors, construction books, blueprints, 'how things work' books, books on buildings, hobbies, etc. *Some general questions I thought the children might ask were: what are things made out of, what materials work best for different purposes, how are materials joined together, how are moving parts constructed, what kinds of fasteners can be used to join materials together, and what could be built?*

Experimentation – playing with the materials

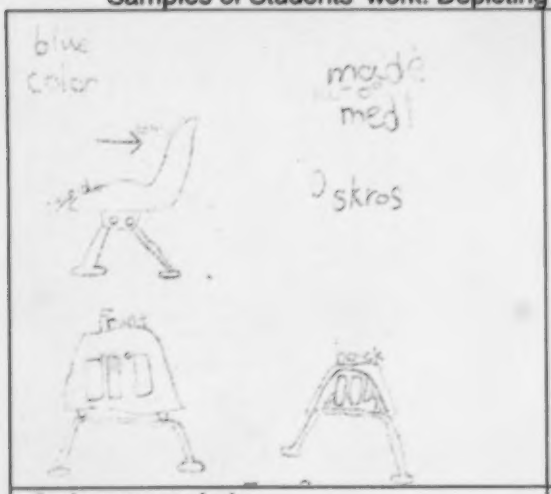
When I paint, I usually have a spare piece of paper or an extra canvas next to me. This spare piece is my experimental space. I experiment with different colors

and techniques. These experiments enrich my understanding of being a painter and the more aesthetically successful experiments are soon incorporated into my paintings.

Just as the March winds were roaring loudly outside our windows we began this unit in the cozy corner of books we have within the classroom. The children's experimentations follow. *At the very beginning of the unit I wanted the children to begin thinking about how things were made and what they were made out of. By allowing the children to peruse the books leisurely and discuss their findings, I hoped to provide a stimulus to open up discussion and a common place for us to begin to work together.* Since the children in the class start each day by reading together, I placed a variety of books on our reading corner shelves. They were excited to discover the new batch of books and quickly immersed themselves in reading. Books like, *How Things Work*, and the *Eye Witness* series books seemed to be immensely popular. One particular book, *What's Inside Buildings* (Parker, 1993), featured cross sections of a variety of buildings, trains, castles and ships. This book was the topic of many conversations and discussions. The picture of a medieval castle did not capture the children's attention any more significantly than any other cross-sections.

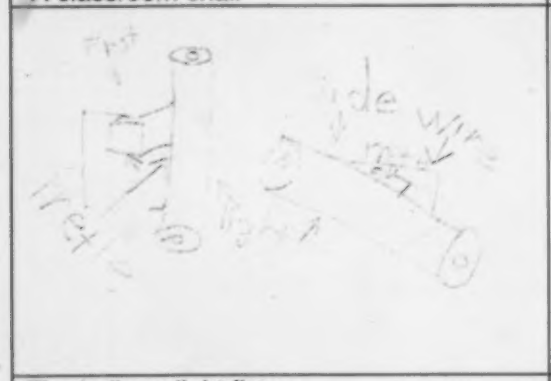
I also wanted the children to be keen observers of how things are made. With clipboards and pencils we sketched and collected field notes on constructions within our school. Some of the children zoomed in, and focused on, the small details, while others looked at the bigger picture. Drawings and observations were made of windows and doors, brick walls, hinges, lockers, tables, chairs, staircases and hallways. The time spent perusing books was well spent because it was reflected in the work the children were doing during these observation sessions. *The children's drawings had an architectural feel to them and were surprising to me because of the details they noted. I brought in actual blueprints for buildings, for the children to look at.* They, in turn, drew blueprints of our classroom, their bedrooms, and objects they built in the block area.

Samples of Students' work: Depicting common objects from in the classroom



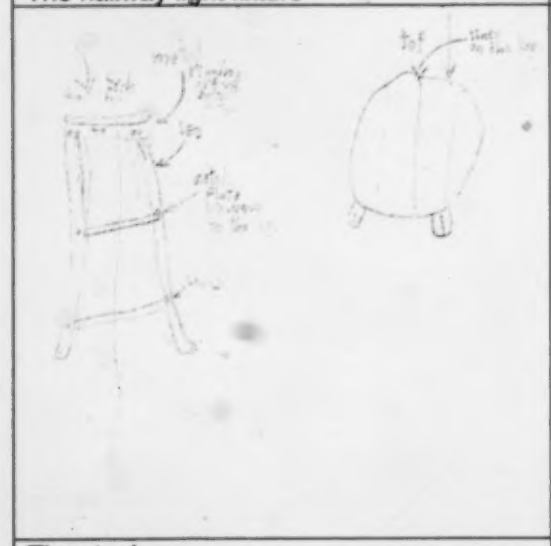
A classroom chair

Our fan

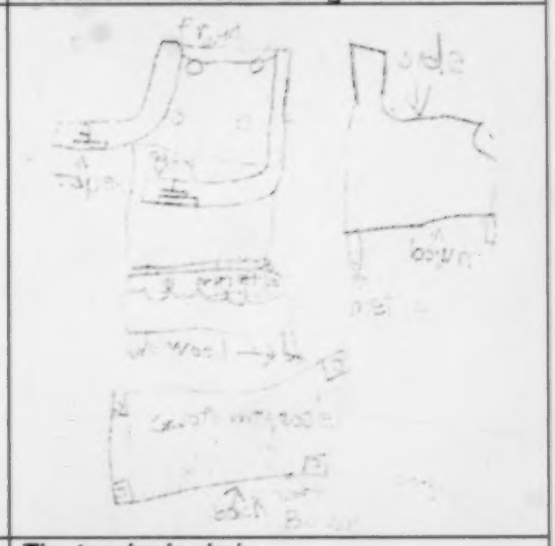


The hallway light fixture

A section of the stair railing



The stool



The teacher's chair

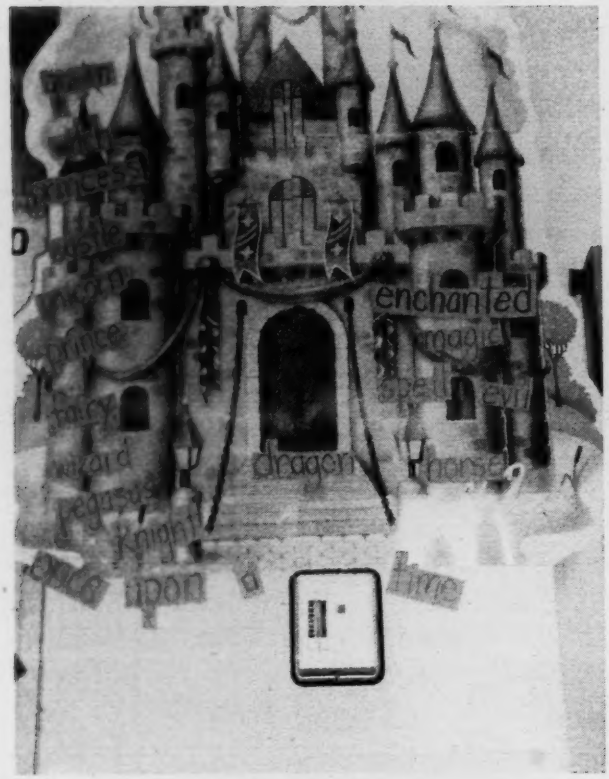
For two weeks, during science lessons, the children were engaged in exploring materials and how they were used. They sorted and classified a variety of materials that I had brought into the classroom (paper, wood, metals, plastic), tested these same materials for strength, flexibility and usefulness. *Early in the unit I was very much in control of the activities and the direction the unit was taking. As a teacher I felt all of these introductory lessons were critical learnings; skills and knowledge upon which the final activity would be built. At this point I did not know what the final 'building' would be.*

Experimenting with materials

The children were becoming more interested in the idea of building things over this period of time. Their wonders and questions began to overlap into less structured periods of the school day, and into their play at recess and at home. Many of the children were experimenting and playing with these materials during "exploration time" and they became increasingly familiar with the properties of these materials. Boxes of wood, cardboard, Styrofoam, paper and other precious "junk' lined the walls and filled every available space in the classroom. *There were times when the clutter and mess annoyed me; as I had to step around boxes or over sculptures.* The clutter never annoyed the children. They just adapted, moved or accommodated what they were doing to fit into the space.

Some children built interesting structures and encountered many problems with cutting wood, joining pieces together and getting them to stay together. Duct tape, glue and wire were used to hold interesting sculptural pieces together; structures that were precarious at best. The problems the children were encountering led them back to the books to look again, back to the classroom and its existing structures for closer observations and more information. These wonders and problems became topics of classroom discussions. During the discussions problems were shared, ideas for solutions offered and completed constructions admired.

The children were engaged in inquiry and the process of answering questions throughout this process. As the teacher I wondered if we would get a tangible, measurable product completed. I needed to trust the children would lead the way and when they were ready they would begin to build something. Terry was the catalyst for answering the question of what we would build. During writer's workshop he asked for some particular words; king, knight, queen and 'upona'. These were words he was interested in using in a story he wanted to write. I wrote the words with his help on some cards. He suggested we place them on a decorative picture of a castle that was hanging on a wall in the classroom. We did this. Perhaps he wanted to begin to create his own word wall. Other children in the classroom noticed the addition of these words on the wall and Terry proudly read his words from the wall. Soon other word suggestions were offered and new words were added to the wall. Prince, horse, castle, dungeon, dragon, moat, lair, etc. all took their place up on the wall.



The castle "word wall"

Beginning the painting – a castle sketch is beginning to take form

I noticed that the children's exploratory structures were becoming more complex and were starting to incorporate new learning (e.g. Terry's great walled castle made of irregular wooden blocks, tall buildings in the big blocks, lego constructions with doors, windows and multiple rooms). *I thought the children were ready for a new challenge, thinking back to the original curriculum documents and suggested an idea to build something – a something that could be a home for a person or an animal.* The some thing that would demonstrate what we had learned about how things are put together. I verbally outlined a

rubric of expectations. This 'something ' could be big or small, but we should all agree on what it would be.

The children in this class love big ideas and instantaneously it was decided we should do something really big! Excited chatter quickly filled the classroom and it was difficult to hear individual voices. I began to record on the whiteboard the suggestions I could hear above the children chatter, call-outs and discussions with their friends. Terry's excited voice was the first I heard above the others; "A castle!" I wrote this down on the white board and followed it with other suggestions: a house for the three bears, a cottage, a village, an apartment, a tunnel, a dragon's cave, a tent, a giant's house, a dungeon.

The children noticed the words I was writing down and immediately started to debate with friends sitting near, what materials could be used, who would do what, and how big the structure would be. Ideas were coming from all directions, all at once and with a great amount of excitement and enthusiasm. *To an outsider looking in at the classroom at this moment I fear they would think I had lost control of the class and the children because of this unruly conversation. However, a careful listener would have heard what the children were discussing and the content of the call outs. The onlooker would hear the conversations were on task and all related to the topic. The onlooker would also see that these were children who were confident their voices and opinions would not only be heard but also listened to.* After a few minutes of all-at-once excited chatter, I stepped in to the discussion and asked the children to start to share their questions, ideas and wonders about building something in a more controlled way so that we could

all hear the many good ideas being offered. I also reminded them of a classroom belief about how we treat each other during conversations - we should listen to each other. Out of this discussion arose the following key questions;

What should we build?
Can we build a structure?
What can we make it out of?

With so many suggestions up on the board, it was difficult for the children to focus their attention on the construction of a single structure. They knew already that each of the structures had to be built differently, perhaps using different materials and methods. Debate was centered on what materials we should use and the debate was not accomplishing anything. We went back to the original need that we would have to decide if the structure were to be big or small. Sheldon quickly spoke up and suggested we build something as big as our classroom, something we could all go into. A chorus of ya's and yeahs filled the room on hearing his suggestion. It was decided that 'big' it would be. Now, what would 'it' be was left to decide. Various children offered reasons why different suggestions would be the best choice. Katherine pointed out that the castle would be the best choice because it would have lots of other people's ideas in it too- it could have tunnels, caves, a dungeon and a dragon's lair. I ended the discussion with a suggestion that we should vote to help us make a choice. The class voted unanimously (20 to 0) for building a castle.

With the castle as the victorious vote, other questions were asked and I included those on the white board:

How are castles made?
How big do we want our castle to be?
How will we know how big to make it?
Who lived there?
What were castles used for?
What materials would we use?
Where will we get the materials?
What tools will we need?
What about safety?

With many unresolved questions, fantastic ideas and building excitement the children left the classroom at the end of the day. Chattering with each other, stopping to tell me how we should go about building this castle and when could we start and.... and..... and..... I reminded the children to look at home and see what they could find at home, things that might help us with our castle building.

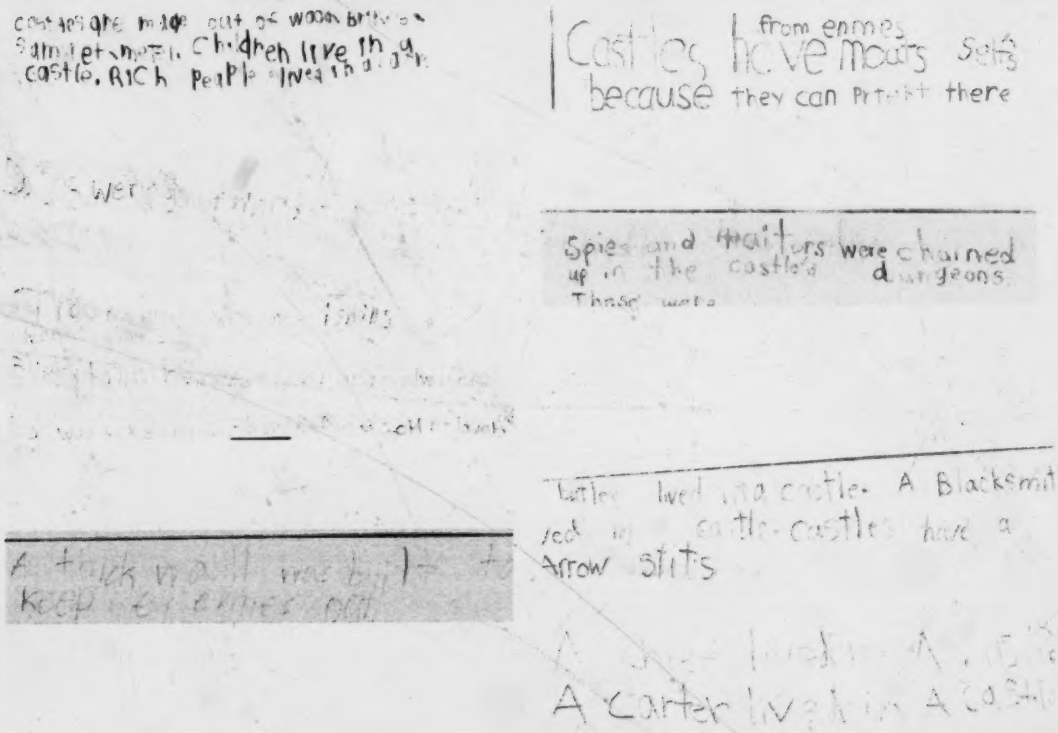
When the children left the classroom, I rushed down to the library, to scoop up as many books as I could on the subject of castles and life in a castle. I put the books in a bin and left them on the carpet area for the children to find and look at when they arrived the next morning. The next morning Terry arrived at school dragging a bag filled with cardboard boxes; Sheldon had a box of Styrofoam chunks; Aiden had a wonderful book about castles. These boys were eager to begin building a castle. The children discovered the new bin of books and were eagerly perusing the pages looking for ideas for a castle. There were children sitting side by side helping each other figure out words and captions

from these books, books many consider well above a grade one student's reading level.

After quiet reading a discussion broke out around the following questions: Are we going to build our castle? Can we start it now? Where are we going to build it? How are we going to do it? *As the teacher in this discussion I wanted to maintain some sort of order and discipline but I also wanted the children to take ownership for the building.* I met their questions with more questions. How can we find out how to build a castle? Where could we build it? What materials would make sense to use in the classroom? Do we know enough about castles to just start building? *These questions related back to the science curriculum. I wanted to present in discussion the student expectations that I knew we would need to meet, and I wanted the children to think seriously about what they were doing and how they would accomplish the task.*

In response to each of my questions, the children had ideas and suggestions. Some of them were fantastical requiring a complete construction crew and tons of money and some were less ambitious. With so much energy and enthusiasm for the project I sent the children to work 'searching" for facts about castles. Armed with pencils, and paper strips, working with partners or in small groups the children began to look for "the facts".

Samples of the facts the children found


Castles have moats from enmes because they can
Spies and traitors were chained up in the castle's dungeons.
Butler lived in a castle. A Blacksmith
Arrow slits
A Carter

After a short while we met again as a group and shared our facts. We then put the facts into two categories- who lived in a castle and what were castles made of.

Who lived in castles?	What were castles made of?
Barons, lords, ladies, troubadours, musicians, jesters, kings, queens, rich people, soldiers, knights and servants all live in castles. Dogs were good friends to people.	Castles were made of thick walls to keep enemies out. They could be made of wood, cement, metal, bricks or stone. The earliest castles were made of dirt and wood. Castles had a moat, a dungeon, a keep, arrow slits in the walls, a drawbridge and more.

Sometimes the children did not want to leave the topic of building a castle, but when we encountered problems that needed time to think through I would

lead the children into other curriculum areas. Sometimes ideas needed time to develop and lots of discussion to work through issues. *Many times it would have been easy just to answer a question a child asked, but I wanted them to be the thinkers and the doers. I answered their questions with more questions: How could we figure that out? Are there any experts to consult? Where can we look? Is there something in our school that might be made similar to a castle wall?, door?, turret?, drawbridge?* Each day we spent time discussing and trying to figure out how we would accomplish this task for ourselves. What would be reasonable and doable? What new information or facts could we add to a growing list of what we knew about castles?

Each day, at least one, if not more, of the children brought 'stuff' from home. A royal red blanket was draped over the teacher's chair turning it into a throne. A dragon (an old Halloween costume) was standing guard next to the chair. Pictures of castles, internet findings, books, boxes, drawings and toys started to crowd the carpet area of the classroom. During quiet reading the children were reading everything they could find that included drawings of castle, or depicted castle life. The book full of cross sections was now the center of much attention. Small groups of children stretched out on the carpet reading, discussing and perusing this two-page layout of a cross-section of a castle.

The teacher's throne

Reading together

I knew the castle was a hot topic of conversation for the children outside of the classroom as well. Many discussions in class were prefaced with "my dad thinks" or "my grandpa thinks" or "my mom ", etc... Parents stopped me after school, or sent emails, asking, " do you really want this or that?", before sending huge boxes, a castle tent, large cardboard tubes, centers from commercial paper rolls, costumes, books, tools, etc. As the children shared their "stuff ' from home and told their stories they also included me, the teacher. The children began giving me notes, so that I would remember to bring my castle stuff to school.

A note from the children

I had pictures of myself, taken in front of a castle in Germany, a costume box filled with royal things, even an old toy castle my children had played with many years ago, as well as tools and materials from my garage to bring. The children knew about these things in my life because during discussions we shared stories of our experiences and knowledge of castles. Some children had visited Disneyland and had visited the castle there. I knew that the Disneyland castle was modeled after a castle in Germany, so I told them of my visits to castles in Europe. The children begged me to bring my pictures.

At this point in the unit we were working together and I felt there was a beginning shift in my role as teacher. Early in the unit it was a teacher led and devised unit. I was the one filling up the classroom, with books and materials, but now the feel of the unit had changed for me as the children were began to voice their opinions, contribute materials and look for information.

The castle begins to take shape – trying out the colors

Still we had not even begun to build the castle. The classroom was filling up and the children were very involved in the process of learning about castles. During exploration time, through play the children were experimenting with castle life. They were building castles out of sand, blocks, paper, lego, constructs, straws, sticks and anything in the classroom that could be moved. There were also groups dressing up and trying on roles of castle life. The castle tent, the puppet theatre and the big blocks on the carpet area were the scene of many royal exchanges.

Dramatic play and building castles

Other children were more engaged in other aspects of castle life. Austin and Aiden spent a tremendous amount of time researching and learning about the symbolism of heraldry. Austin drew and made flags, swords and shields and was particularly interested in eagles and how they were tied to his Polish heritage. Brittany was interested in the care of horses and their role in medieval times. The block area had been reconstructed to include a place to stable our growing herd of horses. Drawings and castle blueprints made by the children were piled up on the corner of my desk. The children's writer's workshop stories were also centering around castle life.

The Castle and I

Once upon a time there was a dragon who lived in a castle. He was the only dragon in the world. He was born on the nineteenth. He is a thousand years old.
I was in the castle too. James and Sheldon were in the castle. James was the king and Sheldon was a guard and I was a guard too. For weapons we used invisible trees. James was the king of Tiebots.
The dragon could go through the world in zero seconds and he could blow seven trillion forests down and the dragon can never run out of fire. The dragon was nice unless a stranger comes in the castle.
A stranger got in the castle. He had a black and white hairy face and he had yellow hair. He was walking.
He came to the castle. He smashed his face so hard that it broke the window.
Sheldon and I we put a dynamite in the middle of the field. It blew a giant hole and he fell down into it.
The dragon burnt him up and turned into ashes. Then they buried his ashes.

The end

Sheldon's story

Cinder Anna

Once upon a time in a far off lane there was a cinder girl that most of you know called Cinderella but this girl is named cinder Anna. She worked much harder than Cinderella. One night she did almost one hundred things.
One day the king's sons were hosting a royal picnic for all the ladies in the town. Cinderella's and cinder Anna's sisters and stepmothers were invited.
Cinder Anna had to cook and help with their dresses. She had to do their hair by herself. She had to knit and crochet. She had to tie ribbons all around and pull their undergarments tighter. She had to put curlers in their hair. Then they went off to the picnic.
Then cinder Anna began to cry. Suddenly there appeared a sorcerer and he said, " I am your fairy godfather. You shall go to the picnic,
He whispered some magic words. Then he touched her with his magic wand and puff she had a beautiful dress on.
"Oh sir, but what shall I go to the picnic in?"" Well my child you shall go in a beautiful carriage." Suddenly a grand carriage appeared and she gasped in amazement. Then he said, " Now you may go to the picnic and you will have a good time at it."
But when she got there a wickedly, jealous, evil, fairy cast a spell on her. She became a very ugly princess and she never won the prince's affection after all.

The end

Katherine's story

Finally, six weeks after the initial introduction to the building things unit, it seemed the children were beginning to reach a consensus of where and how the castle should be built. From the building anticipation, exploration and experimentation the children had a good idea of what needed to be done. It was decided that a raised corner of the classroom would make an ideal place for a castle and most importantly we could all fit in to that space. The children and I had gone and physically tried to fit in the space. We created a chart of items to be included in the castle, the children's names were written beside each item indicating who would do each part. The children decided there would be ten groups or sections. The suggestions for each of the items came from the

children. *I felt there was a shifting of the student / teacher dynamic in the classroom. It seemed I was becoming a facilitator, helper and monitor. The children had begun to lead the way.*

1. moat	James, Sara
2. walls (keep , chamber)	Terry, Katherine, Heidi, Jennifer
3. drawbridge	Erin, Heather
4. inside	Jayne, Aiden, Beth, Dianne, Austin,
5. horses/stable	Brenda, Brittany
6. knights	Adam
7. dungeon	Naomi, Sam
8. dragon's lair	Sheldon
9. other people	Ann
10. costumes, food, flags, shields	Everybody

On a Friday afternoon the groups met and planned how they would accomplish their chosen tasks, Each group prepared material lists. Some of the materials were available in the classroom such as paint, cardboard, brushes, glue, and string. Some of the materials had to be found and brought from home such as hammers, nails, screws, and boards. Some of large sheets of box board were ordered from the school supply warehouse. The children went home at the end of the day eager to begin gathering and preparing materials for the upcoming building days.

Although there were many fascinating stories and wonderful happenings in each of the groups I have chosen not to tell in detail every aspect, but rather to focus on the events as they unfolded with a few of the groups. I carefully chose a few of the stories to tell. I considered which stories had common threads representative of what was happening within every group. Each group had

problems to solve that required additional research or consultations and input from the rest of the class. These stories tell of unique and inventive problem solving methods. Within each group there was a shifting dynamic. The children went from being centered solely on their individual projects and became attentive to the needs of other group projects. Individual children in the class found ways to express their knowledge and became involved like they had never done before. These stories tell of how children found an artful way of expressing their knowledge through play. The stories also tell of the development of a caring and responsive community.

With tools in hand construction begins

The Wall Building Group

On that Friday afternoon, during the initial planning stage, I walked around the classroom checking in with groups to see what they needed and if there were any problems. I overheard argumentative voices coming from the group in charge of the wall construction. This group had encountered difficulty with their plan. They were not entirely sure how to frame the walls of the castle, or how to measure the space or how to decide what materials they would need. I joined the group to discuss the problems. I posed a question for them to consider. Is there anything in the classroom that has a frame to support it? Can we look at it for ideas? One of the children noticed the life-size model of a human skeleton that we have in our classroom. After much discussion and a detailed look at the skeleton, the children decided their walls needed bones. What would a wall's

bones look like? Terry and Katherine recalled seeing boards behind walls in their basements. They decided we should use boards to make a frame. The frame would be like the ribcage on the skeleton.

The group used meter sticks to measure the sides of the raised area in the classroom where the castle was to be built. They needed a long bottom board and a long top board for each section of wall. Many shorter pieces of boards could go in between the long boards and be the bones of the walls. The children and I made quick sketches on the nearby whiteboard. The group needed everyone to understand how the bones would work.

They made up a wood order for our woodman (my husband). Heidi had recalled seeing wood being cut on big saws. She was worried about how we could cut the wood ourselves. In the interest of safety the children and I decided the bigger pieces of wood should be cut on a big saw by an adult. I took the sketch to the woodman and he cut two by four wood pieces to the lengths specified by the children.

The wall builders were excited on the day their materials arrived and helped haul the lengths of wood up the stairs and down the long hallway to our classroom. We pushed back tables, laid out boards on the floor and figured out how the framing should begin. With safety goggles and hammers ready the momentous occasion of actually building the castle began. Sounds of hammering, pounding and huffing and puffing filled the room and attracted a lot of attention from our grade six buddies in the neighboring classroom, other teachers walking by, parents waiting to pick up children, and even the head custodian.

The head custodian, Conrad, known to be rather distant and aloof, rarely, if ever talked to the children. However, he was attracted to our classroom by the sounds of our hammering. He came to see who 'the workers' were in the school. He came into the room and asked me what we were building, At that time I was busy helping a group of students get paint. Adam, although not part of the wall

building group, led him over to the building group. Adam and Terry immediately filled him in on all the details. Much to my surprise, the custodian sat down on the floor and started to help the children pound nails. As he did this he told them stories about when he was a child and had built a fort. He told a story of how he had hurt his head with a hammer when he was little and told them how pleased he was to see they were being so safe. He even told the children had school been like this for him he would have loved school. Terry and Adam were enthralled with Conrad and he seemed to be relaxed and happy with them. This started a routine of daily check ups, friendly hellos and helpfulness from Conrad that we had not experienced before. His tolerance of our messes was very much appreciated as he did much to help, hauling away junk and garbage, cleaning around the construction projects and even helping clean up paint spills.

Gathering an audience

The custodian was not the only one drawn to our classroom by the sounds of our project echoing in the hallways. Parents and siblings and buddies all made

a habit of checking up on our progress, offering suggestions, and even lending a hand to pound some nails. Most parents were exceptionally supportive of our project and really understood my greater goal of fostering independence and creating a sense of achievement and collaboration for the children. An off hand remark by one parent, 'it would have been easier to have a group of parents come and build the castle and faster too." hurt me a little and I felt a bit defensive. However, I used this opportunity to talk about how the children feel about "their castle" and the sense of accomplishment they were feeling.

The castle building was an entry point for many parents to come by and discuss what was happening in the classroom. As a teacher I savored the opportunities to share what we were about with others, to share with parents the changes in the children as their confidence increased and to have open dialogue and discussion about beliefs about education and what is valued. These discussions rarely if ever happen at school. Often it seems we come together over a learning or behavior problem. I learned a lot about the children's families, parents and parenting styles, stories of parents and their schooling, contrasts between siblings experiences and the grade one children's experiences and beliefs about what parents valued in education. I felt privileged to work in a caring community that came together over a project.

The children were also finding ways of working together and collaborating. The wall group soon invited and enlisted the help of their classmates. Terry announced that building was really hard work. The children took turns pounding nails, encouraging and teaching each other how a hammer was to be held and

used. This was the beginning of a collaborative venture for the children. The initial boundaries of the groupings were not important. The children started helping and contributing to each other's projects.

The Dragon's Lair

The wall building group was not the only group whose task turned from singular focus to a collective one. At the beginning Sheldon was the only one who was really interested in creating a dragon's lair. Perhaps it was his interest in dinosaurs that led him to choose a dragon's lair as his contribution to the castle. He set off alone to research and experienced difficulty very early in his research quest. He was astounded to discover that most books about castles did not contain sections on dragons. I wondered if his background in fairytale and literature convinced him that dragons were real? Or if, I wondered, his keen interest and knowledge of dinosaurs made him believe dragons must be real? He patiently perused every book in the classroom looking for information. I encouraged him to begin his plan with what he already knew and then add to his plan as he went along.

Each day we would gather on the carpet in the classroom so that each group could share their progress. I would ask how the projects were going? What work had each group completed? Does any one have any problems they can not figure out on their own? Sheldon brought his problem to our classroom discussion and asked for his classmates' assistance in finding stuff. Adam knew of a book in the school library, *Behold the Dragons*. The two boys immediately

went to the library in search of that book. Later that week, during our weekly library period, Sheldon, determined to find more books about dragons, used the library computer search tools and came up with many stories about dragons and brought them all back to class. We read some of the stories aloud to the whole class and Sheldon sat and read many stories on his own until he decided he knew enough to begin. He used the illustrations within the books as his informative texts and set to work.

He took a heavy cardboard box from our stash, drew a jagged circular line on the side and asked to have this cave-like opening cut out of the side of it. He painted it to resemble stone using dabs of gray, black, and white paint. When he was finished I noticed Sheldon, sitting slumped in his chair, looking very disappointed at his now speckled box. When I asked, Sheldon told me this was not at all what he wanted. Sheldon seemed frustrated and didn't want to continue.

During classroom discussion, Sheldon's problem was again presented to the class and their help was requested. Many suggestions were offered. The next morning Diane arrived at school excitedly clutching a tiny dark blue velvet bag, drawn tight at the top with a string. Inside was a tiny pearl necklace; a treasure for the dragon's lair. After recess, James arrived back in class with his pockets bulging, full of tiny rocks found on the playground. He gave them to Sheldon to glue on to his lair. Over the next few days many of the children assisted Sheldon with his 'problem' lair. A small wooden box, much like a treasure chest was added to the growing mound of jewels, beads, and gold and silver painted

stones. The hot glue used to attach the stones to the box inspired the making of spider webs, plasticine spiders and mice. Sheldon's frowning face was no longer visible in the classroom as he set about incorporating the many ideas and materials into the dragon's lair.

As their teacher I was immensely pleased with the collaborative direction the whole castle project was taking. Diane's and James' contributions to the dragon's lair led to many other contributions being made to other groups' projects. What had started off as each group working on their project was becoming collaborative – the group boundaries had blurred. The original groups were still in charge of the project they had started, but they eagerly welcomed the assistance, suggestions and sometimes the materials from others in the classroom. I worried at the start of the project that the children would find it difficult to share the space and that ownership of the castle might lead to some disagreements. There weren't any though. Every child in the class had a sense that s/he contributed to the castle. It did not belong to any one person but, rather, to us all.

The Drawbridge Group

Heather and Erin are the best of friends. They are inseparable in class and out of class. I was not surprised when they chose to work together on the drawbridge. The two girls work began with heads together whispering over pictures of drawbridges. They brought their problem up at a regular class discussion; they were not sure how to begin. Although they could find pictures of

drawbridges, they were unable to find the directions of how to actually build one. They already had the idea that they needed wood, nails and chains, but were unsure how much of each material they would need or how to put the bridge together. Katherine suggested they wait until the walls were built to see where the drawbridge would fit and how it could work with the walls and the moat. The girls happily agreed and during our next "castle work" time set off to help some other groups. James and Sara happily accepted help on the moat. Heather and Erin were pleased to be a part of the moat making because, after all, a moat was an important part of the drawbridge.

When the castle walls were framed, and roughly put in place, Heather and Erin were called over to decide how the drawbridge was going to work. When the girls arrived in the space they were clearly unprepared for the task ahead. They did not have any idea how the drawbridge would work, or how they should even begin to construct one. Obviously their research had not helped them much. There were times during the castle project, this being one, that I questioned myself as the teacher and whether I was doing the right thing. However, I still

believed the girls could, and would, take ownership of this task and build a drawbridge.

Back to the discussion group went the drawbridge dilemma. I remember leading the discussion a bit with some of my questions. What do you want the drawbridge to do? The children responded by saying they wanted the bridge to go up and down. They wanted the drawbridge to be the entrance to the castle and cross over the moat. I continued with my questions. How can you take an object and make it go up and down? Are there any objects in the classroom/school/at home that work like a drawbridge? The children suggested ropes and pulleys.

Heather and Erin made mini drawbridges out of string and cardboard to test their design ideas. They soon discovered that if one end of the drawbridge wasn't joined to a solid surface, the drawbridge would just slip and swing around loosely. This led them to again look at the classroom. Finally Heather discovered the hinges on the classroom door and excitedly explained to us that a drawbridge is just like a door laying down. Tape served as the hinge on the next prototype and worked very successfully.

The girls now had to make a plan for the drawbridge. They set off to measure the space in the castle wall and the distance from the floor of the castle, across the moat to the floor of the classroom. They came back a little while later, both girls with their arms spread apart. They wanted me to order a piece of wood from the woodman just that size, Erin's arms wide by Heather's arms long. I sent them back to the castle, suggesting they be more specific in their measures.

They both came back a few minutes later and asked for a piece of wood eight feet by three feet. I wondered aloud what they meant by a foot. Erin held up her shoe and said this is one foot! I remember asking the girls how the woodman would know how big a foot is – he might think it is his foot, or my foot, or someone else's. Could they do something specific? A little while later they came back with a cutout tracing of the shoe with eight feet long, three feet wide printed on it. Thus, the wood order was placed.

With the wood order filled the girls set about the task of painting the board to look 'real old'. By this time the castle construction was nearing completion. The last touches were being added, tapestries, flags with family crests, and floor tiles. All that was needed was the drawbridge. Hinges were screwed on and the drawbridge attached to the base of the castle. There was one last problem. How could the drawbridge be raised and lowered? String worked in the prototype, but was much too weak for the heavy drawbridge. This problem needed the help of the group.

I was coming to love the discussion groups. During discussions the children were focused, came up with real solutions to real problems and most of all were treating each other like co-workers. The seriousness of the discussions was reflected in the firm thoughtful set of their jaws, the attentiveness they gave each other as solutions were offered and debated. Chain and rope were given as two options for pulling up the drawbridge. Someone also said we need screws with circles on them for the rope to go through. I wondered if the eyelet screws used to hold up a pocket chart in the classroom were the inspiration. The value of

time spent observing and attending to the classroom surroundings became evident during classroom discussions.

The castle takes shape

Again the girls carefully measured how many feet of rope would be needed and calculated the number of screws. Another order was placed. Budget constraints dictated rope be our choice. At long last the final screw was put in place, ropes were attached and the drawbridge worked. This was cause for much celebration.

Wanting to Continue

The children were not ready to abandon the castle project. They wanted to put their newfound knowledge to use and to use the castle for a purpose. Intrigued by the idea of role playing an event at a castle, the children begged for just such an event. Naomi had brought from home an internet print-out listing foods that would be eaten in medieval times. Austin was adamant we use the

flags and symbols he had made. Aiden, Ann, and Terry were eager to dress up and wear castle costumes. The children's argument was, we had celebrated many special days during the year and finishing a castle was something to be celebrated. The number line that stretched out under our calendar was testimony to the many special events and occasions we had celebrated in the past. Aiden came up with the suggestion we have a feast.

It was already the start of May and, as the teacher, I was feeling the pressure of "getting though curriculum" and making time for district achievement tests. I explained my problem to the children and they offered the solution. They would plan the event, get their parents to provide the food, and organize costumes, entertainment and decorations all during their free time: recess, lunch hours and after school. We quickly made a list of roles the children could portray at the feast and individual children made choices. Over the next few days an air of delighted secretiveness and surprise filled the classroom as little groups gathered, planned and practiced. Children rushed to get through their work quickly so they could practice in the hallways. I was instructed by different groups of children to ask for parent help in our weekly newsletters. I was told what to write, so I composed the newsletters directly on the computer and asked for their approval.

This unit had begun with me, the teacher, directing the children's activities and ended with the children directing and taking ownership for the culmination. I was still included in the plans, but the children seemed to want to surprise me as

much as their parents. Many moms and dads dropped by the classroom to tell of their child's growing excitement and to offer food and assistance.

As the day for the planned feast approached I was feeling slightly apprehensive. The pressure at our school to "perform" is great. We have had many polished wonderful performances in the past. I worried there might be some pre-established expectations. However, the children had taken control of planning the final feast and the entertainment. It was to be their production and I needed to trust them implicitly. If the whole feast was a fiasco I would accept it, and if it was fabulous I would celebrate with them.

It was something to celebrate. This group of learners had taken the challenge of building something and went far beyond my hopes. They not only built a castle, but they also built a caring and responsive community while fulfilling the expectations of the program of studies. As I stood in the classroom on that warm, sunny day I was pleased and satisfied by the picture unfolding before me. I recalled reading "finished art works we see and may love are in a sense the relics or traces of a journey that has come and gone" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 6). As I stood there I remembered events of the past school year. I recalled stories from our shared experiences. I wondered if others could see the many layers of underpaintings. Did they know the stories that led us to celebrate in this way on this particular day?

Sketchbook Three

I described at the beginning of this thesis an amazing painting, one that left a lasting impression on me. This painting is the work of Canadian artist Brent McIntosh. I did not know his name, until a serendipitous event led me to discover his identity.

On a warm summer afternoon while strolling through the city's art district, a spectacular painting hanging in the window of one gallery, caught my attention and immediately drew me in. The style and the feel of the work looked somehow familiar. When I walked into the gallery I was surrounded by giant landscapes, all painted in a similar style by the same artist. I knew this painting had to be done by the same artist I had admired and wondered about. The gallery owner clearly remembered the painting I described. Through the gallery owner, I discovered information about the artist. Mcintosh completed his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Alberta. No wonder his landscapes felt like coming home to me. They were of home. There were other aspects of this artist's work that made this painting even more fitting as a metaphor for my research and personal narrative.

Originally, I wondered how a painting of such magnitude could be achieved. I imagined when painting Brent would be very close to the work and at best only an arm's length away. How could he maintain perspective and the sense of an overall picture as he attended to the minutiae of color and brush strokes? All Mcintosh's paintings, when viewed closely, are a riot of color and texture. The 'picture' is revealed when viewed at a distance. McIntosh's paintings are both abstract and impressionist landscapes. His work appears to be

influenced by many great master impressionists. He takes the idea of playing with light and color in a painting and creates impressions of familiar landscapes.

The gallery owner answered my wonders by explaining Brent's unique painting style. He usually paints in a very large studio, canvases on one side of the room and mirrors hung on the opposite side. When painting Brent works close to the canvas, paying attention to details of color and texture, while at the same time attending to the overall picture reflected in the mirror. My vision of how these masterpieces were created changed. I no longer thought of this artist as madly racing away from his painting (to create distance) and then racing back to add color to the work. I no longer had the impression of the work as a frenzied act, but rather, more reflective and controlled, a thoughtful, contemplative act attending to details and overall impressions.

Teaching is an art....

When teaching I feel like an artist; I imagine particularly the style and methodology of a painter such as Brent McIntosh. I am up close to the canvas (schooling) interacting with individual students (colors), responding to the individual needs of the moment (textures) while at the same time attempting to focus on the overall picture (curriculum making) developing before me. In painting there are regular intervals and opportunities when the artist can step back, stepping away from the painting to contemplate overall effects and the effectiveness of newly acquired techniques or methodologies. There are very few opportunities to step back during the day-to-day act of being in the classroom.

The act of teaching and learning with young children is all consuming and I am often in the moment, responding to the children.

The photographs the children took, my photographs, my journals, children's work samples, my reflective, introspective pieces of writing and time and distance from the actual grade one experience and classroom curriculum-making provided me with an opportunity to reflect. I reflected about what happened in the classroom during the time of the unit on building things. During this time, as I composed this research text, I attended to the whole picture and examined the complexity of the construction.

After cleaning up my classroom and shutting the door on the last day of June, I left for home. I then took advantage of a unique opportunity to step away from the experience and view at a distance what we had accomplished. I packed my bags and books; left all that was familiar, language, place, time, and traveled on my own to Europe. This experience gave me a "mirror" to look into and the opportunity to be deeply reflective. Just as Brent McIntosh uses a physical mirror to gain perspective on his landscapes, I use time, distance, memories, photographs, notes and work samples as a mirror.

On this trip I hope to gain perspective to write with a clear head. It is difficult to write when my mind is clouded by the busyness of everyday living. Perhaps this journey will allow me to meditate and hear my voice away from all the clutter of home and school. I have only my voice to listen to. The physical journey is allowing me to take the inner journey to find my thesis. (Journal entry, July, 2003)

During long hours on trains and planes I thought about the special group of children I had the privilege of working with. Because I was in countries where I did not know the language, I could sit in cafes and be contemplative without having any other's conversations intrude on my thoughts. Because I was away from all that was familiar, I could look back with fresh eyes. I took time to think about the experiences the children and I had and I attended to the stories and the pieces that made up the whole year. During this process I recalled certain experiences, stories and the children involved.

In the first sketchbook I describe how my stories of childhood, parenting and as a teacher are the underpaintings of me as a teacher/researcher and set the stage for this narrative inquiry. These stories are a part of my embodied way of knowing and acting within the classroom. They are part of my 'story to live by' (Steeves, 2000). I think of myself as a caring teacher, and a teacher that encourages children to be involved in and engaged in learning. I see myself as a participant in the co-authoring of curriculum making with children. The attributes of caring, encouraging, involved and participating, describe a part of who I am. However, listing of attributes does not tell the essence of me. Vivian Paley writes, "we can be known only in the unfolding of our unique stories within the context of everyday events" (1990, p. xii).

It is within the context of day-to-day life that I knew the children in my classroom. As their unique stories unfolded in the classroom, alongside my stories, I learned about the responsive, caring nature of teacher/student relationships. The stories that make up this third sketchbook tell of the

underpaintings of the castle building experiences. These stories tell how we came to know how to author curriculum together. Colors, forms and textures of these stories resonate in the final picture we created.

Katherine's story – "Can it be any other way?"

Katherine is an extremely bright, articulate girl. Sometimes she seems more mature than other children in the class. Her parents are very involved in her learning and it is evident they encourage her to share with them what is going on at school. Katherine participates in discussions with thoughtful ideas and cohesive questions. She is not impulsive and erratic in her thinking, she is rather reserved at times. She is a child whose voice echoes in my ears.

I sat writing, in my journal, sitting at a sidewalk café in Germany. As I wrote, I heard Katherine's voice, speaking through time and distance, imploring me; "How can we do it any other way?" She was referring to our castle building and had asked this question of me one morning in the midst of the commotion of castle building.

As the children were getting organized in the morning, handing in homework, changing home reading books, settling in to read with a partner and exchanging morning greetings, Katherine approached me with a concerned look on her face. When I looked up to greet her, she burst out, "My sister thinks we can do anything we want in grade one!" The tone of her voice and her furrowed

brow led me to believe Katherine felt her sister was belittling her grade one experience.

I can't remember exactly the words we exchanged in the conversation that followed but I remember feeling the need to discuss with her how she felt about "doing whatever she wants". Katherine was excited about what was going on in our classroom. She was a member of the group building the walls. The many 'problems' they had encountered during construction probably were the topic of dinner table discussions.

I could imagine her going home each night with stories of what was happening in the classroom and relating her wonders and ideas to her family. Her elder sister was probably astonished and incredulous that a grade one student could have such a strong voice and sense of ownership in the happenings within the classroom. To her it may have sounded like the children were doing whatever they wanted.

During the conversation with me, Katherine told me she knew we didn't just do what ever we wanted, but we had real things to learn. She knew from past experiences in this class that we were learning. I remember asking Katherine how she felt about solving problems on her own or with classmates. She said she liked being involved in the decisions and she liked hard work at school. I wondered how she felt about the project we were involved in. Her response was she loved the castle project and remarked "How can it be any other way?"

I too wondered, could we have done this any other way? What had led us to a point, where as a group, we could engage in an interactive, collaborative

means of curriculum making? What events and stories enabled the children to be a part of this constructivist approach? How had these children learned to have active voices in my classroom? When had they discovered they would be listened to?

One of my journal entries, shortly after this conversation took place reflects my wonders and concerns and perhaps my doubts as well:

> *Have I set up Katherine for disappointment in the future when she is handed a more traditional type of school experience? There are so many times (during building of the castle) I could easily have stepped in and taken over, but I didn't. Perhaps why is a good question for me? Perhaps why Katherine's sister felt that I should be leading the way and not letting the grade ones "do what ever they want" is also a good question. What is it in her school experience that makes her believe school is this story? A story of teacher doing.*
> *What is it in my personal narrative of experience that makes it so important for me to allow and encourage the children to have voice in their education?*
> *Will Katherine's experiences during the castle building have a lifelong effect on her as a learner- will she always be someone who takes control of the situation and will she want to inquire along with her classmates? (Journal entry, April, 2003)*

This conversation represents an important layer of underpainting in the curriculum making experience. Katherine's question forced me to re-examine my narrative of experience. The establishment of a classroom where children have a voice in the makings of the curriculum was so embedded in my "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989) that I did not immediately recognize it. This tacit knowing had shaped how I engaged in a relationship with my students. As a child I felt that school was something done to me, not with me. I wanted something different for these children. I wanted to recapture the feeling of belonging and being listened to that I had at my Granny's tea table.

The Number line- Beginning a shared story

The establishment of routines and habits is important in my classroom. These habits and routines shape the experiences of the children. Threads of habits established early in the year can be felt throughout the school year and may effect the future. I believe as Dewey wrote, that:

> The basic characteristic of habit is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. (Dewey, 1938, p. 35)

The story of the number line demonstrates how a slight shift in habit can make an impact on further shared experiences. Attending carefully to the children and being responsive to the developing relationship within our shared story was another important layer of underpainting.

Every year I keep a number line in the classroom to record the number of days we have been in school. The children experience the passing of time, the accumulation of number and the patterns of number in our world. We start on the very first day of school recording the numeral one on a long strip of paper that stretches out below the calendar. It feels very celebratory, the start of a long, adventurous journey, the start of something exciting. I'm not sure why, but this year, September 2002, I quickly drew a red happy face next to the numeral one. Perhaps I was impulsively responding to the inner happiness I felt as the teacher starting a new school year. Perhaps I was responding to the happiness of the children and their smiling faces. Perhaps I wanted to reassure us both, that yes, this was the start of a great adventure.

I did not realize that this small act would be the impetus for a much more significant role the number line would play in our day-to-day interactions. That little speck of red triggered a response in the children. They wanted and seemed to need to add symbols representative of important or significant events as they unfolded in the classroom or school. Slowly at first, gathering momentum, the number line underwent a transformation and became a time line. This narrative time line was used to record many special events. The class welcomed a new student to the classroom, recorded the passing of months and seasons, acknowledged 'chicken soup with rice days', and recorded the first snow fall and the first day of spring on the number line. Special occasions such as the pep rally, school assemblies and field trips also found their place on the number line. The number line registered the passing of time and building anticipation for future events such as the 100th day of school.

The number line gave the class a place to record and share our collaborative story. The story was improvised and written as it was being lived. The children's conversations would often begin "remember when we..." or "it has been along time since." The children would point out significant events to visitors in the classroom. "This was the day Beth started school." Or "this is when it first snowed". The number line served as collective memory. For example, when someone would start to tell a story if it began with "In kindergarten" or "when I was really little", other children would quickly correct the storyteller. They would do this by pointing to this event as happening in grade one followed by the words, "it must be so because it's on the number line".

The number line was significant in another way. When I look at the numbers and events I see the journey we took as a class. The journey clearly began with me as the authority figure. The numerals are confidently and clearly articulated in teacher print. The drawings and symbols, although directed by the children as to what and where to place them, are adult renderings. At the end the childishly printed numerals, words and symbols are evidence of a change, a change from teacher as an authoritative figure to one of co-constructor. This partnership was formed with the children over time. The number line was the silent witness to this unfolding narrative. I wonder how this collaborative act created entry points for the establishment of a community of caring and trust.

Dewey wrote, "control of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are cooperative or interacting parts " (1938, p. 53). The number line became a cooperative game we all had a hand in. It was a place for recording and sharing common experiences. As such, it not only represented my "will and desire", as the teacher, rather it represented "the moving spirit of the whole group" with "individuals" as "parts of a community not outside of it" (1938, p. 54). As the children and I recorded important events on the number line I sensed we were building a collaborative community. The teacher/student relationship as a shared experience was an important narrative piece of underpainting. I felt the children tacitly knew this and gradually started contributing to the classroom. Co-authorship of curriculum making began tentatively on the number line and strengthened as the year progressed.

A naming ceremony: Establishing co-authorship

The children and I had to learn the process of collaboration, and practice reaching a group consensus. This story, the naming ceremony, establishes one of the ways we came to understand author's voice and establish co-authorship of the curriculum making in the classroom.

My grade one classroom is full of books, games, animals, dolls, dress-up clothes, blocks of all shapes and sizes and a vast collection of precious junk. Many resources I use are cast-offs from my own children while others are newly purchased. My classroom is an extension of myself and my childhood and parenting experiences. I delight in finding new 'treasures' for my class. Several years ago the primary math curriculum had a dragon-like creature featured in the workbooks we used. I found a lovely puppet to represent this character and used it extensively when I was teaching math from this particular resource. When this math program was replaced by a new one, the puppet was no longer a teaching tool and was now relegated to my puppet and 'stuffie' box. A 'stuffie' is the name the children use when they talk about stuffed animals or toys. All of these things are available to the children to use and move and explore with during 'Exploration Time' in grade one.

Early in September, Ann found the dragon puppet in the box and immediately loved it. She did not want the puppet put back in the box. Instead she wanted it to sit on our bookshelf. For several days Ann played with the puppet, holding it as she read, or playing with it in the dress-up corner. One day she came and asked what the dragon's name was. I didn't have a name for the

dragon, so I asked her what she would like to name it. She suggested "Fluffy". Some children nearby said, "Fluffy doesn't sound like a good name for a dragon." Adam suggested it should be "Fiery". Someone else suggested 'Anastasia'. The children all wanted their name to be chosen. An argument over the name was beginning to get heated. We had a problem.

I always try to model problem solving techniques and how to reach a solution with my class. This was an opportune moment for problem solving. I stopped the class and asked if we could have a quick meeting on the carpet. We had not had a lot of opportunities for problem solving as it was still early in the year. The children quickly gathered on the carpet. I am sure they were wondering what the 'problem' was. It must be important if we all had to stop and meet with the teacher. Ann told the class she wanted to name the dragon "Fluffy" and some people wanted other names.

I led the discussion asking the children for solutions to our problem. Questions such as, "Is this fair?" " How can we choose something we can all agree on?" were asked. Suggestions were slow in coming. The children seemed used to being told what to do, rather than engaging in problem solving. I offered some suggestions on how we could proceed. We could just let Ann decide. We could all choose a name. We could leave the dragon nameless. Katherine suggested we make a name graph to help us decide. We had been making all kinds of graphs in math around questions of favorite colors, favorite activities, and favorite books. Making a name graph was a natural and opportune time to use math in a meaningful way for the children. Ann got a pencil and paper and

together we wrote the names Fluffy, Fiery and Anastasia at the top of the sheet of paper.

Ann wanted to figure out the rest on her own, so we thanked the class for their suggestions and the children went back to their exploration time. Ann went around the class asking each child to pick the name they would like the dragon to have. Unable to complete the graph on the first day, Ann continued work on the following day during exploration time. She made sure everyone put his/her name on the graph, including me. When the graph was finished she proudly brought the results over to show me.

Wanting to honor the work Ann had done and to demonstrate a successful solution of a problem solving process, I stopped the class and asked for a quick meeting on the carpet. Ann showed the class the results of her graph. Most people had chosen Anastasia as the best name for the dragon. There were groans and sad looks on some children's faces. We discussed whether the process we had gone through to choose a name was fair, and why it was or was not fair. It did not take long before the children decided the process was fair and the decision was fair. We now had a newly named dragon to welcome to our class.

Beth, the student who had previously been welcomed to our class by posting her name on the number line, suggested we record Anastasia on the number line too. I quickly sketched in a dragon and wrote a welcome to Anastasia next to the numeral 16. This was after only 16 days of grade one! At

cleanup time Anastasia was placed gently on the bookshelf to guard the books. A place of honor she maintained for the rest of the school year.

The naming of Anastasia led to the naming of other dolls and 'stuffies' in the classroom. No other name left as long or as lasting an impression on the class as Anastasia's. A photo of Anastasia sitting proudly on a bookshelf nearly one hundred days later was the first photograph taken. Perhaps this is because she was the first stuffie named and she was representative of the problem solving process we learned together.

This story resonates for me as another layer of underpainting in the curriculum-making story. These impromptu discussions were valuable in setting the tone of the classroom and how we treated each other. We negotiated our way through many decisions, and in the process, learned how to treat each other with respect, tolerance and appreciation. The children learned how to voice our opinions and how to listen to others. Nel Noddings (2002) writes that many "children lack opportunities to engage in real conversations with adults" (p. 125). She suggests that " the quality of ordinary conversation" (p 125) may be the "very heart of moral education"(p 125). These conversations became precious time for me and the children. Noddings also writes it is "in ordinary conversation, we are aware that our partners in conversation are more important than the topic " (2002, p. 127). Perhaps these conversations and discussions lay at the heart of learning how to attend to one another and really listen to each other.

Who chooses? Reaffirming co-authorship

Our classroom had flexible table arrangements and seating plans. The class room had 10 small tables arranged in groups of two with 4 chairs at each; 2 larger tables with 8 chairs; and 2 round tables with a varying number of chairs grouped around them (4-6). Most of the tables and chairs have a clear view of the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. Although I do not think of the classroom as having a front, 'the front' is the name the children gave this area.

This flexible arrangement suits my teaching style and my beliefs about children and how they learn. I believe that children should be given choices frequently and when they are, they rise to the occasion and grow within these challenges. One of the first "choice making" activities the children have is choosing where they would like to sit. It is interesting to watch the children make these choices. Guidelines are set early in the year – choosing a spot to sit has to be where you are comfortable, can see and hear and be the best learner you can be. At first this spot may be one near a best friend, close to the teacher or where their parents have told them to sit. As we move from carpet to tables and back again, the children have to continue to reassess and re-choose. I purposefully do not send the same children to the tables first. I vary the order so that the children always have an opportunity to think about their choice of where to sit. Inappropriate choices are learning opportunities for us to discuss what an appropriate choice would be. Most of the time this belief and process works well.

One day I overheard Sara telling Jennifer that she was "special" because she was sitting at the front table. I had noticed a competition starting to occur between these two girls over a particular seat. Heather had also written a letter to me about the problem in her dialogue journal. These dialogue journals are small bound books in which the children and I carry on written conversations. The children are encouraged to write personal narratives, to ask questions, or address a problem they are having. The topic of the writing is self-selected.

Excerpt from Heather's journal "February 20th, 2003

Dear Miss Weighill
I think that we should leev the tabolle next to the micorrav weritis and move the frunt tabolle and onely have four tabolle and then avaryone wud be abol to see and I think it will be better
from Heather"

I decided to address this "problem" with the children as a whole group. I opened up the topic of discussion as a problem we were all having and we needed to discuss it so that we could all work together. One of the children asked why we didn't we have desks in our classroom? I re-explained to the class why we chose to have tables and not desks. I not only allowed, but encouraged and expected, them to be able to choose their own seating arrangements. I wanted them to exercise their brains and learn how to make appropriate choices for themselves and their own learning.

Sara was sure that if I took over and assigned everybody a seat that the argument over a particular seat would end. I thought it was interesting she wanted to turn the problem back to me and have me solve it. I wondered if this

was an old story of teacher in the position of authority. I wondered if having adults in control of decision making was her experience. During this discussion I learned something about myself as a teacher. When I am demonstrating to the class, or need to put a book or something down, I often use the front table as partially my space. The girls liked to be there because they felt close to the teacher and saw themselves in a helper role. Hence, the competition to be my 'right hand' person.

Many suggestions were offered as to how we could solve the problem. Some of them involved me taking on the role as the authoritative figure. Others were concrete solutions. As the children talked and shared ideas I sketched out the possibilities on the whiteboard. Finally during this discussion we reached a consensus as a group as to what should happen. The class felt if the middle group of tables was bigger, perhaps more children could be there and that way no one would feel left out. The children and I then reconfigured the desks.

I responded to Heather's journal with the following letter:

> Dear Heather,
> Thank you for your good suggestion. Do you like the new table arrangement?
> Smiles from
> Mrs. Weighill

She wrote back

> Dear mrss. Weighill
> I do like how you change the tabols arownd I aspeshalea like the tabol that has three tabols and the frunt tabol because it has to chars because then to people can sit side by side and more people can sit at the frunt tabol.
> Smiols from Heather

Following this discussion with my grade ones I also made a mental note to move my materials and change my position more often. At times this is difficult to do, because of the physical design of this classroom. Large items like whiteboards, screens, tv, computer and shelving are configured in very traditional ways. These physical configurations seem to dictate a front and/or back of a classroom.

This story of choosing is another layer of underpainting in the curriculum making experience. It illustrates the negotiation of roles that the children and I engaged in throughout the school year. I think this type of negotiation helped establish shared authority within the classroom. When we were building the castle there were many times when it would have been easy to step in as the authority figure and say "no, do it this way, my way." This story reminds me why I did not take over and direct the children through building the castle.

Discussions: Sharing stories

Although I have referred to our classroom meetings as "discussions' they were actually shared story telling. I believe, as does Dewey, "education is essentially a social process" (1938, p 58). Language is the social construct though which we can share our feelings, ideas, thoughts and also clarify our understanding of others. The establishment of what to build and how to build a castle was born from classroom discussion. A discussion is a social construct that allowed us to forge caring relationships with all as participants. I recognize the importance of discussion groups as pivotal in co-constructing curriculum. I

believe children need, and want, a place to have their voices heard and will respond intelligently when asked to participate in discussions. These 'discussions and debates' evolved and developed over the course of the school year.

My beliefs about children needing to be involved in and an active part of learning has led me to attend to their stories and to give them a place to tell stories. Discussions provided a forum to model problem solving, share stories and establish expectations for participation, negotiation and debate. I established the following simple rules early in the school year; ideas were to be shared, putdowns were unacceptable, helping was encouraged, problems could be solved and, most importantly, each person had the right to be heard and listened to.

Early in the school year discussions focused around friendship and routine issues. I would begin a discussion group with "I've got a problem I need your help with. Can you help me solve the problem of ....?" We figured out the importance of taking our shoes off before entering the school building, bringing water to drink and fuel our brain, getting ready quickly for school, taking responsibility for pencils, papers, books, etc. It did not take the children long before they were also coming to me and saying, "I've got a problem" and "we need to discuss it". Children who felt left out at recess would bring their problem to the class and it would be soon resolved by several offers of playmates. Other problems such as forgotten lunches, lost mittens, missing buses and even academic problems in writer's workshop found a place at class discussions. Discussing problems often led to "storytelling". Sometimes the children would act out a problem. The boys,

especially, found it easier to show how someone got hurt or demonstrate how a disagreement occurred. Sometimes even I was an actor in a story.

I recall being asked by Sam and Austin to participate in the telling of a recess problem. The boys loved to play tag at recess and had gotten into trouble with one of the supervising teachers over the roughness of their play. They were both upset because they were asked to stand next to the wall for the entire recess. When Sam was telling the story, Austin jumped up to show the class how other children were tagging each other in the game. He asked me to put on my hooded jacket so he could demonstrate for the class. It seems, some children were grabbing each other's hoods as they ran by. Austin grabbed my hood and pulled. The children sitting on the carpet were quite surprised to see me gasping and choking as Austin grabbed my hood and I pretended to fall down and hurt myself.

This short impromptu skit graphically illustrated for the children why the supervising teacher was concerned about the children tagging each other in such a rough way. I didn't need to say a word. Ann blurted out, "That's not safe! You could get hurt!" Sam and Austin then showed the class how tag could be played safely. They changed the ending of the story, within the safe confines of the classroom, demonstrating that they had learned an important lesson about how we treat each other. The children were visibly relieved I was not hurt and to find out I had only pretended.

Sharing of stories was never formally scheduled into the classroom routine. Rather stories evolved out of a response to authentic needs. These

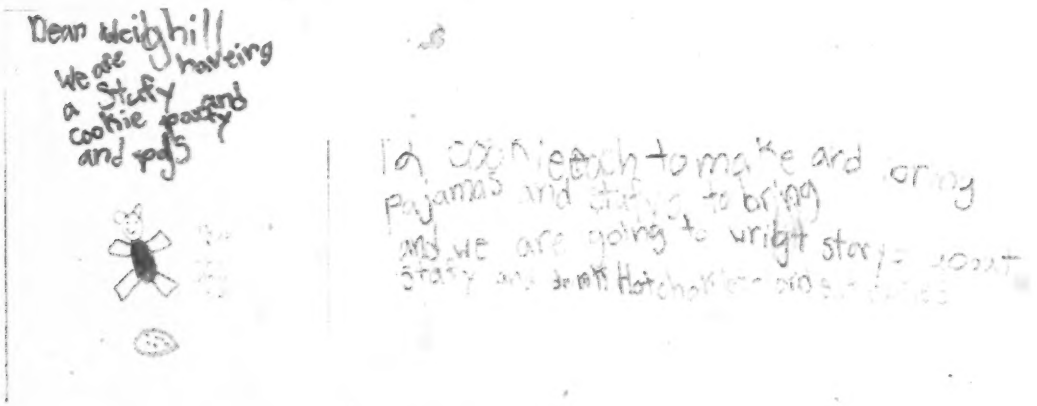
discussions occurred by attending to the needs of all participants: teacher, student, and parents. The development of sharing stories and problem solving through discussion was an invaluable tool we utilized when we built the castle. The skills developed through shared story telling helped the children and I attend to each other. Attending to each other was another crucial element in developing the caring relationship that underpainted the curriculum-making process.

Authoring curriculum: Owning the celebration

About a week prior to the hundredth day of school I invited the children to be my co-workers and help me with my research puzzle. Anticipation and excitement were building as the children noticed we were getting closer to the hundredth day of school. The number line was becoming longer and longer as more and more numerals were added to the strip of paper stretched out below the calendar. During our daily classroom discussions the children remembered celebrating this special day in kindergarten and wanted to continue this tradition. The children wanted to revisit some favorite activities from kindergarten and to add some new activities that would help us celebrate and make this celebration special for grade one. We started to create a list of what we could do together and added to the list each day as the hundredth day approached. Making hats, counting, writing hundreds of words, eating and playing games were at the top of the list.

We had more ideas and suggestions for what to do than could possibly be completed in one school day. Katherine, Sara, Heidi, Beth and Erin thought we

not only could, but should, have a 101st day at school as well. They even thought they could plan it. The girls left a note they had written during exploration time on my desk.



The front and back of the note left on my desk

These girls had taken to heart the idea they were my co-workers. Each girl had an activity they thought the children in the class would like to do. I thought it would be interesting to stand back and let them try. Each girl then wrote a note asking their moms to provide cookies for a 101st day celebration. Beth had ideas for what could be done in math and wanted my help at the computer to make a math worksheet. During recess she dictated the task to me while I typed. Beth was very pleased to take her math sheet down to the office and get it photocopied for the whole class.

Katherine wanted all the children to bring stuffies to school for the day and thought it would be a great idea to have writer's workshop with all the children writing about their stuffies' adventure at school. The group had ideas for the morning message, agenda and physical education as well. These girls had their

own ideas about curriculum-making and what were 'school' activities and they wanted to try them all.

The 101st day of school was finally here and I was curious and a little apprehensive of what would take place. Before the children arrived in the morning, Erin's older sister arrived at the classroom door carrying a plate of cookies. Erin was too sick to come to school, but she had insisted that her cookies had to be there for the class. She understood and had internalized the idea of being a responsible teacher. She knew when I was away I left plans and things for them to do with a supply teacher.

When the rest of the children arrived at school they came clutching favorite stuffies in their hands, eager for another celebratory day of school. When Heidi, Sara and Katherine arrived I could not help but laugh and take a photograph.

They had interpreted the hundred and first day of school as really a 101 day, One Hundred and One Dalmatians Day! The three of them were dressed in black and white and were carrying Dalmatian stuffies. Our teachers for the day were ready and in character. Katherine wrote the agenda on the whiteboard and Heidi wrote a morning message as the class settled into reading. Beth made sure her math materials were ready. The girls played with the idea of authoring their own curriculum and tried on a new identity – that of teacher.

The children felt they had freedom to try new identities and take responsibility for classroom activities. This helped create a sense of shared ownership in the classroom. As others in the classroom witnessed these girls successfully 'being teacher' they too may have wondered what identity they would like to experiment with. They may have wondered if they could lead the class, in some way, in the future. The children's developing sense of security and willingness to experiment with new identities in this way added another layer of underpainting to the unfolding castle story.

Terry's story: Joining an imagined story

I first met Terry when he was still in kindergarten. His brightly dyed and spiked hair and pockets filled to overflowing with action characters caught my attention on the playground. Terry was often alone at recess, kneeling near a bench, seriously engrossed in playing out a story with his characters. There was something endearing about him.

Terry didn't participate much in class at first. However, I found him a very interesting little person to watch. As the other children gathered on the carpet near my chair, Terry would barricade himself in the back corner. He would take cushions and place them around his body and wedge himself into a small corner created by two benches that bordered the carpet. He often stayed there, watching from the sidelines. I consciously tried to invite him into discussions or activities. Each day I would renew the invitation. I learned to accept how much he was willing to participate. Slowly, at first, he began to come out of the corner. He would crawl around the edge of the carpet and work his way close to my side. I would find him nestled close to the side of my chair when I was reading or telling a story. He was getting closer, but he still was not part of the group. He would stay there for awhile, then retreat back to his spot. During exploration time he would draw or build. His drawings were of battles, and dragons, and dinosaurs and warriors. Other times he would build with blocks and lego. Sometimes he would bring his action figures in to enact some story.

As the building things unit started to unfold, Terry started to blossom. Sharing the castle idea and Terry's 'expertise' with the words on the castle picture served as a turning point for him. His buildings and his drawings attracted the attention of his classmates. Terry was becoming a part of the group. I noticed his voice in the story more often. He stopped barricading himself in the corner and began to sit in the middle of all the children.

One day, in the gymnasium, the teacher who I shared the space with, noted the 'remarkable job' I had done with Terry. "He seems so much more

together and focused, Not such a waif." I did not think I had really 'done' anything to Terry. Instead I felt he had 'done' it all. He had found a way to be a part of the community in the classroom when he was ready. The children had been invited into his world of make believe and his story.

It wasn't very many days after this comment that Terry had a triumph in the gym. The children love to play a tag game where everybody is it. The last one standing in the game gets cheers and applause from the others. On this day, Austin and Terry were the last two standing. There was a lot of excitement in the gym as Terry tagged Austin, who had been the reigning champion of the game. On the way back to the classroom Austin walked up to me with a huge smile on his face and said, "You should have had your camera to take a picture of Terry winning the game."

When asked, Austin probably could not have articulated that this was a great moment for Terry, but instinctually he knew it. A few days later, as we were leaving the classroom for the gymnasium, Austin asked if he could take the camera to the gym. He had remembered "posing' for pictures earlier and he wanted a picture of Terry winning the game. They posed. I took the picture.

When I think of Terry, I think of the power of story. Nel Noddings writes, "stories have the power to direct and change our lives" (1991, p. 157). When Terry invited us into his story, it had a dramatic effect on his outward appearance. He became more confident, self assured and was now centered in the classroom.

These stories of a grade one classroom are constructions that give meaning to an event and they convey a sense of the overall experience. It is in this sense these stories underpaint the experience of building a castle. As I attended to the stories that under painted this experience I was surprised and pleased at what I found. When I pealed back the layers of our painting I discovered many influences, underpaintings of curriculum making, that shaped and illuminated the finished piece giving it texture, color, form and depth. John Dewey (1938) writes experience does not occur in a vacuum but rather "there are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience" (p. 39). This resonates for me about the experience of castle building that myself, as teacher/researcher, and the children as learners experienced. While making sense of the building things curriculum we drew upon our personal experiences and told stories of our shared experiences and our present experience to shape new learning. Establishing the elements of trust, voice/authority, identity, and caring within the classroom laid the foundation for co-constructing curriculum in this way. These elements were embodied in these children as they played, created, improvised and learned. They were also embodied in me as the teacher as I took my place in this story.

Sketchbook Four

According to Tibetan tradition the mythological birthplace of painting itself is in the Indian state of Bihar, a land that lies flatly between the Himalayas and Calcutta. There were, so the story goes, two kings who lived in the sixth century B.C. Every year they would exchange gifts – outdoing each other, as rich people often try to do with the cleverness and expense of their choices. One year one of the kings decided to give his rival the ultimate present - a painting of the Buddha, who was at the time still alive and living in Bihar. No painting had ever been done before, but, undeterred, the king assigned the job to a man who seemed to have potential. But when he arrived at the place where the Buddha was in meditation, our first artist realized he had a problem: he was so overwhelmed by his subject's enlightened glow that he could not look at him. But then the Buddha made a suggestion. "we will go down to the bank of a clear and limpid pool," he said hopefully "and you will look at me in the reflection of the water." They found an appropriately limpid pond, and the man happily painted the reflection. When the king received the gift and looked at the portrait, he had an intuitive understanding of the reality. In terms of Buddhist teachings he realized that the world we see with our eyes is just a reflection of a reality that we cannot quite grasp. But the story also gives an insight into the power of painting, suggesting that this thing that is a reflection of truth can also be the truth, and the best art can give its viewers enlightened understanding of the world.
(Finlay, 2002, p. 222)

Reflection

This story is representative of my hope as teacher/researcher as I reflect on the picture of curriculum making the children and I created. In reflection I hope to find and represent narrative truths of my experience. The image of the school, the classroom, the children and myself as a teacher will be discussed. In reflection not just the surface picture will be attended to but, rather, the entire image. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) described image as "something within our experience, embodied in us as persons and expressed and enacted in our practices and actions" (p. 60). I continue to use the metaphor of painting to discuss the findings of this study and to gain enlightened understanding of my experience, the children's experience, and the lasting images we leave in our knowing.

An image is not merely a picture. Underneath a finished painting are many layers- these layers I call underpaintings. Embedded in a piece of art are influences of history, other artists, developments in science and technology, culture, and the impressions and vision of the artist. These influences could be described as the underpaintings. It is the same when I consider the finished picture of the castle building and the narrative inquiry in this grade one classroom. In the depths of our painting, in the underpainting, I see shadows. Shadows cast by educators, researchers and philosophers who have shaped my understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

In the Gallery

With these ideas in mind let's look at the two paintings that had significant roles in this study. The first is the painting of a landscape by Brent MacIntosh. The second is the co-construction of curriculum as a metaphorical painting. Imagine with me the opening night at a gallery showcasing these works. Each artist is in attendance, standing proudly before his/her work. The two artists have invited the people whose life, work, and stories have influenced the finished painting. There are small groups of people gathered around the paintings, deep in conversation.

If we eavesdrop, for a moment, near Brent MacIntosh's painting we might hear him thanking VanGogh, Monet or Renoir for their creative and innovative style of painting. You might hear them discussing colors, pigments, techniques. You might hear them sharing stories of artist's struggles and challenges. You

might hear Brent tell stories of how Edmonton and the prairies provided him with inspiration for his paintings. You might hear him reflect back into his childhood as he acknowledges a person, perhaps a teacher, who helped him see himself as an artist. Let's leave Brent with his honored guests and go into another part of the gallery.

In this room are gathered the other artist(s), family, friends and honored guests. All of the people here had in some way helped to shape and define the medieval castle feast painting. I hear myself in conversation with these people. I use the following written conversations with others as a way of improvising my interpretive research text. Narrative inquiry is relational inquiry. We figure out who we are and forge relationships by telling stories and by listening to others' stories. I was often alone in my conversations while conducting this study. I was a participant in the experience, but I was alone as the researcher. I recall a different time when I was a participant in another person's narrative inquiry. We spent many hours talking, sharing stories and figuring out. As researcher/teacher in the classroom I only had myself to converse with. I looked to literature that shaped my stories, then I thought of my story and laid my narrative threads alongside other people's lived stories in order to create a conversation. This is my way of engaging in a figuring out conversation, without the actual people present.

The Imagined Conversation

I found inspiration for thinking about my work through the creative efforts of others. Brent (McIntosh) your unique painting style led me to start thinking about my experiences as a teacher and the relationship I have with my students on the landscape of school. I have found parallels between our work. Brent (McIntosh) you acknowledge your work does not reproduce well. Reproductions of your work flatten it into two dimensions, losing some of the color, texture and depth. As I tell the story of our curriculum-making experience as a painting, I feel it, too, loses some of its dimension. It is difficult to capture the depth of the experience in a two dimensional linear way. I find myself stepping away from my canvas, trying to create distance from telling of this experience, trying to see the completed work as one whole piece.

In the retelling the experience is intact. However, as I write this inquiry in this research text, I find myself going back and forth. Perhaps this is what you are referring to, Jean and Michael (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) when you write about tensions in narrative inquiry and the difficulty of representation in a narrative research text. I certainly discovered the difficulty of representing this inquiry as research text. The 'restorying" took me in "a kind of back and forth writing". Writing that involved "receiving response, revising, setting it aside, writing another chapter or section following a similar process"(p.167) until finally I begin to feel "there is a sense of a whole" (p.167) picture " a piece that feels like it could stand, at least for this moment, alone (p.167).

When I first noticed and attended to your paintings, Brent (McIntosh), I wondered how you were able to work up close, attending to detail, and, at the same time, keeping the whole picture in mind, maintaining perspective. I too was interested in this back and forth motion of attending to detail and whole picture at one and the same time in schools. Maxine (Greene) you remind me about "shifting perspectives and different modes of seeing" (1995, p. 9), and help me question "whether it is better to see the world small or to see it big?" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). If I view my work as one small teacher and one small class of young children on a broader landscape of school, I might see us as being a small and somewhat insignificant part of a whole system. However, if I shift my perspective and think of the people on the school landscape as big, I attend to my work in a different way. My students and I are "participant(s) in the midst of what is happening" (Greene, p. 10). When I apply this point of view to my work and to schooling in general, I understand, Maxine, when you say "the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable." (1995, p 10) During my narrative inquiry I attended to the un-measurable, the emotions, plans, initiatives, and uncertainties of being in the midst and provided glimpses into the reality of the children's and my curriculum-making experience.

In my narrative inquiry I told and considered stories of curriculum making. I have attended and searched for a way of being in the classroom as part of a caring community. Together, the children and I discovered caring relationships were the basis to all that followed. These relationships were fundamental to the

process of curriculum making and served to underpaint the picture we created. The writer, Avi, is reported as having said, " If you can convince your children that you love them, then there's nothing you can't teach them" (Calkins, 1991, p. 11). I thought about attending – truly attending to my students in the way Maxine (Greene, 1995) describes as " attending concretely to children in difference and their connectedness" (p. 42). I too feel called on to truly attend and respond imaginatively to all the children in my care.

As a beginning teacher I was a different teacher than I am today. I was more tentative and less sure of myself as a teacher, more apt to lean on "outsiders' such as colleagues, principals, parents, curriculum experts, teachers' guides and manuals for guidance. Some of the things I did, then, seem hollow and meaningless now. For my students and I, the basal reader stories and teaching strategies are long forgotten. My changed view of curriculum has enabled me to rely less on curriculum activities from guidebooks. I have moved away from these meaningless and disconnected activities to attempting to "invite, inspire and accompany young children in their becoming" (Collie, Davies, Waldron, 1999, p. 85).

I wonder if you see yourself in me, Granny? When I greet my students at the doorway to the classroom I always try to smile and acknowledge each child's presence. This time at the doorway reminds me of you, and how you made me feel (just like a breath of Spring). No matter what you were doing there was always a warm welcome and time for me. This simple act of greeting, acknowledging and welcoming my students is the reincarnation of you Granny,

you and your sacred, welcoming space. I see this simple act of welcoming as a way of attending to each one of the children in my classroom. I wonder, if they too, feel they are being invited in – to explore who they are becoming?

At an early childhood conference several years ago, mirrors were given to each teacher in attendance. The mirrors were tangible reminders that children see who they are becoming reflected in the eyes of significant adults. I imagine the limitless possibilities for the future embodied in the little people who enter my classroom. I smile and encourage them to become.

I used to feel guilty about the stories and the lengthy 'discussions ' I have with my students. I used to feel the outside pressure of mandated curriculum and what 'real schooling' should look like. I used to feel the outsider's presence to control my kids to please them. I listened to discussions at staff meetings about 'bad' kids and how we must make these children behave. I listened as rules were established and set for all of us to follow. I listened as behavior modification specialists came to our meetings and told us how to mete out rewards and punishments. I was very uncomfortable with this talk. I had come into the teaching profession wanting to be a caregiver, not an enforcer of rules, regulations and punishments. I wanted to listen to the children, hear their stories, tell some of my own stories and create new, shared, co-authored stories.

I have always told stories to my students, and story telling seems to work well for many purposes. I shared stories of my family, childhood and my granny with my students. These stories let the children enter my world and they in turn reciprocated and told me their stories and let me into their worlds. The

fundamental principles of belonging, trust, voice and caring were shaped at my Granny's tea table and are expressed through my actions with my students.

Instead of being an enforcer, I told the children stories in the sacred space of our classroom. Stories of my brother and his antics at home and school. Mark was a mischievous, curious and somewhat impulsive young fellow. A real Curious George! (Rey, 1941). His stories were told and retold to help others figure out the whys of their behavior. Discussions often involved 're-storying' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), ways to change or fix the endings to make new stories. I found the children listened to "brother" stories and could empathize with him and understand why he did what he did. They would then turn these stories around and we would tell our own 'trouble 'stories. Troubles at recess like throwing snowballs, playing tag too roughly, not remembering to take turns, and teasing. These stories led to ways for the children to change their own behaviors positively.

John (Dewey) you remind me that education is "essentially a social process" (1938, p. 58). When I tell the story of the castle building I realize how embedded in my personal practical knowledge (Clandinin &Connelly, 1988) is the idea of learning as a social construction, a way of learning. The many discussions, or rather, I should call them storytelling sessions, we had over problems, and listening to the children as they discussed what they wanted to build are all examples of the social processes we engaged in as we worked alongside.

Working alongside is important in the development of this curriculum making story. John (Dewey), I witnessed first hand a changing dynamic within my classroom and the relationship I had with my students. You remind me "when education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator' and "takes on that of leader of group activities" (p. 59). The 'quality' of the castle building experience was realized by the degree in which the individuals, my students, their parents and myself as teacher came to form a community group. The number line was a silent witness to this transformative process in our classroom. The shifting dynamic and the moving of our group spirit was captured in the number line as we co-authored our story.

It must be difficult, for someone who has never taught, even though they might have children of their own, to understand the bond that develops between a teacher and his or her students. I often speak of the children as "my" children. Even outside of school if someone asks me "How are your children?" I sometimes find myself telling about the children in my class and not my own grown-up children. The boundaries between work and school become blurred. School is as much about my personal life as it is my work life. A long time ago, a teacher I worked with, had cautioned me to keep the two separate. I can't imagine doing that, like Katherine, I echo her words, "how can it be any other way?" The children and I became a part of each other's lives and our stories became entwined as we engaged in making meaning of curriculum.

You can't imagine how relieved and supported I felt when I first discovered the book *You Can't Say you Can't Play* (Paley, 1992). Vivian, for the first time, I felt supported in what I was doing with my students. I saw my storytelling as a personal way to connect with students and help them make meaningful, insightful changes in themselves. You gave me courage to slow down and let the storytelling happen.

The Authoring Cycle

When I think about curriculum making, I am not talking about curriculum as the mandated guides and manuals that list specific tasks, student objectives, learning outcomes, materials and so forth. Although these aspects of curriculum are important, I rethought the meaning of curriculum and the making of meaning from this narrative experience. When I think of curriculum I am thinking in the same general terms as do Jean and Michael (Connelly & Clandinin) who focus on "curriculum is something experienced in situations"(Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 6). In this case the experience is the building of a castle and the stories that surrounded the building. The situation is a short period of time in a grade one classroom.

I first began using the authoring cycle as a means for getting my students to write and as a framework for writer's workshop. Lucy, (McCormick Calkins, 1991) you inspired me to use writing as a means of encouraging children to write. During writer's workshop my students write on self selected topics, such as their life experiences, for a lengthy period of time. I use these long blocks of

uninterrupted writing time to let children explore their ideas. Following the writing children come together around an author's chair to share stories. Through these sharing sessions we learned to revise and edit our stories. Jean and Michael (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) we have borrowed a term from you and sometimes call these sessions "restorying" times. The children begin to see themselves as having a voice in the creation of stories. When children are ready they publish and present a finished piece to the class. We all share in the celebration of authorship. And then the cycle starts again - each time the writing gets better. Newly found knowledge, skills and the children's growing fluency all make their way into the stories.

When I first started Writer's Workshop other teachers often questioned me just as I had questioned myself, "If you spend this much time each day just writing, how are you ever going to cover the curriculum?" I felt the tensions of covering curriculum content expectations and while still allow time for the children to explore their own interests. Pam (Steeves, 2000, you talk about how children's stories evolved over time when children were given time to engage in inquiry. Uninterrupted blocks of time extended over days and weeks were crucial to the success of inquiry. I had to let go of many things before I considered myself a teacher who was leading children through inquiries. I had to let go of the 'old story' of curriculum as a set of skills, topics, and ideas to be memorized and taught in a predetermined sequence that I experienced as a child. I let go of the assumption that all subjects consisted of a common core of known knowledge needing to be broken down and taught sequentially to all students. An

assumption and curriculum model I had experienced as a high school, college and university student. Inquiry is not like this. I have come to think of curriculum making as a story with multiple authors following an authoring cycle.

The International Baccalaureate primary years program (IB PYP) is built on the philosophy of inquiry as a vehicle in which to learn. On first coming to Victoria school I had to engage in a personal inquiry to figure out what this would mean and how inquiry could impact my classroom teaching. Engaging in this personal inquiry has made me understand the process my students go through when they are engaged in an inquiry. While on the personal quest of learning more about 'inquiry' as a model for teaching, I met Jerome Harste and Kathy Short (1996). Kathy and Jerome your work on learning through inquiry (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996; and Short, Schroeder, Laird, Kauffman, Ferguson & Crawford, 1996) has helped me rethink my teaching. I, too, have questioned and felt the tension of theme-based units and the covering of content in the curriculum. In the past I often thought children's voices were not heard in thematic units. They were left out of the authoring process. I used to think of "authoring' only as a means of writing stories. I have since expanded my definition to think of authoring as a means of constructing curriculum.

When my children write I never require them to "get it right" the first time. We write, edit, revise, conference, rewrite, edit and so on until we are satisfied for the moment. Teaching and learning through inquiry is like this too. Kathy and Jerome (Shorte & Harste) remind me how important it for me, and other teachers

to use "children as curriculum informants and to continue and grow as professionals"(1996, p. 4).

I, as do many other teachers, feel the pressures of getting through the curriculum. I even alluded to feeling this pressure in the castle story. It was very difficult to abandon the old story of schooling. In school, I often feel pressure to complete a topic, finish a project and move on to the next item. The children taught me a valuable lesson. When the castle was finished being built, the children were not finished with it. They were now ready to play. This was the point in the curriculum making where the children expressed understanding of the experience. As a teacher, I needed to allow the children to continue their world and not push them into something else. I am happy I did not listen to my internal nagging and chose to listen to the children instead.

By listening, the children were allowed a space and a place to play out their story. They had a space to try on and experiment with new roles or identities. Sheldon was king for the day. Terry was the proud knight in shining armor, excited to be in a story where everyone had a place, including him. Beth stepped into center stage and sang for us. She had come a long way from being the "new kid" we welcomed back in September to being an integral part of our responsive community. Diane stepped forward and shone as a star in her personally choreographed dance. Is she beginning to see herself in a new way? Heidi and Katherine were supportive and nurturing of others in their roles as servants, making sure everyone was fed. Brittany, letting go of her usual

seriousness, was a juggler and a clown. The castle space created a secure and caring space for these stories to unfold.

Stephen (Nachmanovitch) you remind me that the essence of an art form is what we see or experience and "finished art works that we see and may love deeply are in a sense the relics or traces of a journey that has come and gone" (Nachmanovitch,1990, p. 6). As I sit in a reflective position, I see it as all this and more. The direction the children's artistic expressions took surprised me. What we ended up with was a theatrical performance, a 'play' filled with interesting characters and dialogue set on a stage. Live theatre improvised for an audience. I see that the feast was as much a performance, although a somewhat spontaneous and improvised one, as any other main stage theatre presentations the children had been a part of at Victoria School. They were all actors expressing parts of themselves through the 'play'.

When I started this study I was interested in how children express their understanding of the world and the curriculum. I wondered how their voices would be heard and what stories they would tell of themselves. I wondered if story, conversations or artful representations would be the best method for inviting children into curriculum making. Originally I thought the children would tell their stories through "art'. I had, in my head, the preconceived notion that this art form would be visual.

Stephen (Nachmanovitch) you remind me "Spontaneous creation comes from our deepest being and is immaculately and originally ourselves. What we

have to express is already with us, it is us, so the work of creativity is not a matter of making the material come, but of unblocking the obstacles to its natural flow" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.11).

I saw in the play of a medieval castle feast, a version of theatre enactment, perhaps more sophisticated than the two year olds in *Mrs. Tully's Room (Paley, 2001),* but similar none the less. Vivian (Paley), do you see a " reincarnation of home and invention of theatre" (Paley, 2001, p. 11)? In the comfort and security of this classroom the children created a castle 'community', a home for us all. In this space the children saw and listened to each other the same way as Mrs. Tully's two year old babies. In the castle community of Gradonea, the children could see and listen to each other. They found their personal strengths and they learned how to work together. I am reminded again of Stephen's work. Through play the children "did come together as one" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 94). In the castle everyone had a place – a place to belong. There was not one child who could not play. Thank you, Vivian (Paley) for reminding us that when we play together we learn to like one another and when we share our stores we develop relationships (Paley, 1992).

As teachers we are always concerned with children learning and developing intellectually. You (Vivian Paley) could have been speaking directly to me, and not Mrs. Tully, when you validated her story telling activities as intellectual activities. Do you recall telling her, " your children are practicing logical thinking. When adults do it we say they're having an intellectual

discussion, but when young children put all this stuff together people barely notice" (Paley, 2001, p. 13).

On the internet, I found a sermon written by a Baltimore minister (First Unitarian Church of Baltimore, Phyllis Hubbell, www.toad.net) that also recognizes your valuable contributions Vivian. When I read this sermon I thought of Terry. At the beginning of the year, I recall, Terry barricading himself in the corner and playing by himself, he was an outsider. In the castle community his role had changed, he was an insider – a child others wanted, to not only include in the play, but go to for ideas, advice and problem solving. He had begun to see himself in a new way. He saw himself as a contributor to a classroom community. Terry stopped barricading himself in the corner and turned and faced us, he became a part of the community. I wonder if this new story will overlap into his future stories, and be embodied in his future actions. Will he be more confident?

Phyillis Hubbel echoes you, Vivian (Paley) when she asks "Can't the classroom be a nicer place? Can't the classroom which is a public place, set patterns that can last a lifetime?" I agree with her. Should we not be setting the children up for future successes? The only thing I disagree with here is that Phyllis Hubbel describes the classroom as a public place. I learned from Jean Clandinin, Michael Connelly (1988, 1995, 2000) and my good friend and university colleague Pam Steeves (2000) that teachers and students create unique places in classrooms – sacred and 'secret' places where our stories are free to be played. You talk about secret spaces residing on a landscape of schools. Places where children and their teachers live out their storied lives. My

classroom is such a place. I wonder if perhaps classrooms need to have a secretive 'feel' in order for children to have freedom to express their stories?

Perhaps this idea of a "secret' space fulfills a very primal need for security in young children. I am reminded of William's (Glasser,1986) work *on Control Theory (*now called choice theory*) in the Classroom.* William you make me think about the five basic needs we all have and remind me observable behaviors are only an expression of a person (child) seeking to fulfill his or her basic needs. I think of Terry, again, barricaded in a corner at the beginning of the year creating a safe, secure place for himself. I think of him at the end of the castle feast, standing away from the corner, in the midst of the story he helped create. Had he found his place to belong? I think so. I witnessed a transformation in Terry that had a direct effect on his academic achievements. Feeling secure and having a sense of belonging had created a space for Terry to begin to take risks with his learning. He started to see himself as a capable student. The timid little fellow was gone and in his place stood a knight armed with courage and confidence.

Is this what you were thinking of Vivian (Paley) when you began to think about creating a kinder gentler place for all children to belong? A place where all children could be involved and there would be no exclusions (Paley,1992). I knew intuitively something special was happening in my classroom. During the building of the castle I was amazed by the high levels of cooperation, support and collaboration I was witnessing each day. I recall telling Pam (Steeves) that this castle project was much bigger in the children's mind than the castle really was. The castle was also 'bigger' in my mind as well in the sense that we were

not just building a castle. The children had formed, at least for the moment, an imaginary inclusive world.

I wondered at the start of building this castle if there would be periods when children would be arguing or fighting over ownership of the castle. I had seen children in the playground exclude others and say, "you can't play". I had helped dry the tears of many little ones and tried to help them find a way to be included in the play. I wasn't sure if the in-classroom space would be any different. I was amazed at what I saw unfolding before me. Here were children building the idealistic world where everyone could play that you first imagined Vivian.

I recall Aiden's younger sister stepping forward and joining the feast. She asked Brenda if she could play her violin for us. Brenda willingly handed over her violin so she could play. I wondered if the adults standing around the edges of the classroom knew the beauty of what they were witnessing. Here, right before us, the children were showing an alternative way of the world - a world where everyone could play.

The children were in a space that exemplified caring and caring relationships towards each other. When I think about caring I recall how I was cared for. My sense of being cared for and in being a caregiver is similar to yours Nel, "It is feminine in the classical sense – rooted in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness" (Noddings, 1984 , p. 7). We all want to be cared for and to be cared about. This is again one of William's (Glasser) basic needs. Perhaps children are intuitively attuned to this need. I recall Erin as she reached for the

camera to take a picture of "something really important". Her something really important was a picture of "a kindness tree' that we had developed together. The words on the tree were there to remind us of how we believed we should treat each other in our classroom. Erin probably could not have articulated why "caring" and 'kindness' were so important in the classroom, but she knew without it our classroom would have been a different place altogether. She also knew instinctually that caring is one of the fundamental principles in human relationships.

John (Dewey), you challenge us as teachers to create learning spaces where children learn though experiences; experiences that will live on and reside in our students for a lifetime. Will this building of community live on in these children? I know that this experience will become an important part of my personal lived story. When we attend so fully to an event in our lives, the entire experience becomes an enriched one. The depth of the experience is expanded through attention.

Had the children learned through play how to create a community? This improvised theatrical production came about through children's playing. Stephen (Nachmanovitch) when you wrote your book *Free Play* you acknowledge the exploratory nature of "the inner dimensions of improvisation" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 6). I too, "found it inescapably fascinating that the conception, composition, practice and performance of a piece of music (art) could blossom in a single moment and come out whole and satisfying" (p. 6). The castle story as it played out before us was a wholly satisfying experience for the children and

myself. Like you Stephen, (Nachmanovitch) I too, "have come to see improvisation as a master key to creativity"(p. 6). For young children improvisation is playing.

Throughout the building things unit the children engaged in playing and they learned to improvise. They played with ideas they found in books, they played with materials, they constructed and deconstructed with blocks, they played with identities as they tried on roles in the classroom. They found their creative voice in the curriculum making. The children's enactment of a feast at a medieval castle was improvised, creative, play making.

Improvisation entailed some risks for both the students and myself. Curriculum making also involved some risks for the students and myself. I had the mandated curriculum in my mind as we set out on this journey. When we started, I had to insure the children also had a sense of curriculum by inviting them into the puzzle. "We would build something!" I had to give them enough of the curriculum picture for them to have some sense of direction, but I also had to be sure not to take over the authorship of the curriculum making. I had to leave enough space and time for the children and I to explore and create. This is where the risk lay. I find comfort in Stephen's advisement to remember "The heart of improvisation is the free play of consciousness as it draws, write, paints and plays the raw material emerging from the unconscious. Such play entails a certain degree of risk" (Nachmanovitch, p. 9). "I had to trust that the children would use the time, space and materials to answer the inquiry questions. I have come to see the story of castle building not only as an exploration of curriculum

making but also a story of improvisation and children's creativity. We had to play before we could construct this castle or gain any meaning from the curriculum. "The child is the voice of our own inner knowing. The first language of this knowing is play" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 50). Perhaps play released the children's imagination to use the arts to create social change in an imaginative way as they enacted a caring community.

In thinking of community, Maxine (Greene, 1995) you tell us "we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying and the like. You remind us that "community can not be produced simply through rational formulation or edict. Like freedom, it has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common" (p. 39). The castle and classroom space may have, for a moment, been infused with " the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming" (p. 39).

As this narrative inquiry comes to an end I do not feel finished. The authoring-inquiry cycle of learning and informing our lives through narrative inquiry is a never-ending process. "Becoming" the teacher I want to be will continue to be a lifelong process. This castle building story, like others that have underpainted it, will continue to shape and determine my future actions as a teacher. John (Dewey, 1938) reminds me, and other teachers, of our primary responsibility as educators. We need to:

> be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions" and " to recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile. (1938, p. 40)

What I take from this experience is an awareness that curriculum as inquiry starts with personal and social knowing (Short & Harste, 1996). Caring relationships that teachers and students have can be developed through stories. Thus, we begin curriculum making by listening, not by teaching. This means that children do not come to us as blank slates needing to be filled up, rather this means that teachers and students both play key roles in the making of curriculum. The environment that is conducive to inquiry and learning as a social process needs to be a collaborative one.

I think about my surroundings, the space, the children and I inhabit together. This space is multi-dimensional. Most easily viewed is its existence as a physical space with four walls and a door inside a school building. The less tangible elements of the space are equally as important as the physical elements. The children have taught me in order for a collaborative space to exist there needs to be freedom to express, create, play, and imagine. Freedom of expression comes from the security of belonging in a space. A sense of belonging comes from focused caring attention. These are the intangible elements that were a part of the classroom castle community the children and I constructed.

The classroom as a sacred space becomes the place for launching children into the greater landscape. We go back to Maxine's (Greene, 1995) concept of thinking big and small. The children start small – building a community in manageable child-size pieces. First, a castle within the walls of a classroom. Then, I imagine the community extending to include other children, other classes, other schools, other spaces.

The knowledge I have gained through this inquiry has changed my focus as a teacher. I still need to have a thorough knowledge of the mandated curriculum as outlined by the province I teach in, but also, I need to create an environment that allows for multiple perspectives and interaction of stories. Children need time to play, imagine, create and question what could be, before we push them into something else determined by others. Instead of trying to teach the children everything I think they need to know about a topic, they need time to explore and wonder about the world. To do this I have to attend to the development of a space and a place for talk and interaction among students. They need to be encouraged and allowed to think collaboratively with others.

Because I have had this experience, I attend differently to my classroom space and the students within it. I engaged in inquiry alongside my students and I, too, had to "wander and wonder" (Shorte & Harste). I eventually found what I care about as a teacher. I believe that curriculum making through inquiry is not just a replacement for thematic units and teachers' guides. It is a philosophy that

permeates my entire school day and is embodied in me as personal practical knowledge.

I began this thesis with a reminder to my self about painting and how a painting is never really completed. What I told you of the painting I created with my students is not a completed painting. It is a mere stoppage at an aesthetically pleasing point. The castle story did not end with the feast. The morning after the feast, the children wondered, "What now?" I did too. A simple question, led the children into an entirely new inquiry that honored the castle story. It's Spring! Hmm.... what do you think castle residents would be doing in the Spring? ..... This inspired planting a castle garden and so the story continued.....

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